Sports / A30

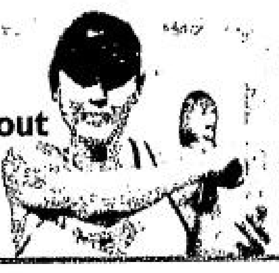
Pacquiao signs up with American manager for March 9 bout

■ Business / B3

California firm buys RP call center for P200M

■ Lifestyle / C1

Fashion gets workout in tennis bringing chic to sweat



■ Business / B1

'New breed' of mining firms lauded for making RP investment hot spot

■ Entertainment / A3-1

Sampaguita, '70s rock goddess, now a domestic diva

Pope recovering well, says top Vatican official

ROME—Pope John Paul II spent a restful night on Wednesday and was responding well to treatment after he was rushed to a Rome hospital with breathing problems brought on by the flu. Doctors, however, are keeping vigil for any complications.

The Holy See insisted there was no cause for alarm, but a top Church health official said

POPE/ A9

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Ehem! 'Saints' attend seminar on corruption

By Armand N. Nocum

"SAINTS" were in attendance at the first of a series of antigraft seminars held at the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board yesterday morning.

EHEM!/ A4

PATI NGA SA BUWAYA, E... NAIBINTANG ANG GRAFT NA YAN.!

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Friday, February 4, 2005 ★★ 64 pages / 8 sections / Vol. 20 / No. 58 P18

website: www.inq7.net

Credit rating cut ruled out

PRAYERS are offered by Carmelita Basbasan from the Kalinga tribe to usher in the stakeholder's forum on responsible mining for sustainable development at the Heroes Hall in Malacañang. In her speech, President Arroyo discloses her strategy to ensure that environmental protection go hand-in-hand with mineral exploration. *(Story on Page B1)* EDWIN BACASMAS

Giant British bank bullish on RP economy

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

WITH foreign investors finally getting to appreciate the gains made by President Macapagal-Arroyo's fiscal reforms, global credit firm Moody's Investor Services appears to be no longer in the mood to consider the Philippines a bigger credit risk.

In a study "A Good Start To 2005," Standard Chartered Bank, the British banking giant, reported that Moody's, which put the country on review for a possible downgrade in November, "has dampened its tone in (its) latest January update."

"The imminent risk of a two-notch downgrade, acknowledged by officials themselves last month, has receded substantially," said Standard Chartered in the study issued on Jan. 13.

The bank noted that positive news over the New Year prompted Moody's apparent change of heart.

"Tax bills that have been anchored in Congress for the past three months are finally beginning to emerge from the legislature. The labored process of selling assets of the loss-making Napocor (National Power Corp.) made an important breakthrough with the agreed sale of one of (its) major coal-fired power plants for $561 million," Standard Chartered said.

Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp., which handles the privatization of Napocor assets, sold the Masinloc coal-fired power plant to YNN consortium last Dec. 22.

"We continue to view developments on the ground favorably," said Standard Chartered in a statement issued yesterday, citing other positive data such as the accelerating growth in exports, government spending well below the deficit target, robust remittances from overseas foreign workers, and strong net portfolio investments—$427 million going into bonds and stocks in the first three weeks this year compared with the $486 million for the whole of 2004.

In addition, the peso has strengthened against the US dollar the past few weeks. The local currency closed yesterday at

CREDIT/ A10

'Top cops protecting ex-NBI agent'

By Alcuin Papa

WHY did it take so long for law enforcers to catch up with Martin Soriano?

Police believe that powerful people, possibly ranking law enforcers themselves, have been protecting the controversial former agent of the National Bureau of Investigation who has been implicated in cases involving kidnapping and illegal drugs.

"He has been slippery. Plus, we would like to think there were people protecting him," Director Avelino Razon of the National Capital Region Police Office told the Inquirer yesterday.

Razon declined to elaborate beyond saying that "these protectors are the ones we are going after now."

Soriano was presented to the media in a press conference yesterday in Camp Crame. Units from the NCRPO and the Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (Pacer) ar-

TOP COPS/ A4

IF MARTIN Soriano talks, he would allegedly name powerful people as his protectors in a string of criminal activities. JOAN BONDOC

FACES OF POVERTY

Rice rations yield '100-percent class attendance, weight gain'

By Volt Contreras

THE PROGRAM involving rice rations for students from poor families in exchange for class attendance is yielding both positive and "unexpected" results, Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman said yesterday.

Since the Food for School (FFS) program was launched on Nov. 8 in selected schools in Metro Manila, Bulacan, Cavite and Rizal, "anecdotal evidence" has shown "100-percent attendance and visible weight gain" among the mostly first- and second-graders, she said.

According to Soliman, there is reason to assume that a student's younger siblings who are out of school have also gained weight, because all members of the family get to share the steady supply of rice.

But here's the amusing part (or the disturbing part, if taken as a reflection of the poverty in the communities covered by the program). "Because of the rice, some pupils who were actually sick were being forced to go to school," Soliman told the INQUIRER.

Also, many parents are now eager to collect their children at the end of classes, to make sure they get their ration. They now have an added "incentive" to look after their children, she said.

Other "feedbacks" recounted by Soliman were:

RICE/ A22

We passed tax bills, where's the pork? solon demands

By Carlito Pablo

SO WHERE'S the "pork?"

Rep. Douglas Cagas (NPC, Davao del Sur) voiced out what he said was the frustration of most members of the House of Representatives who have been kept waiting for the initial release of their pork barrel for 2005.

Cagas said the administration had made a "promise" that it would expedite the release of pork barrel funds if members of the House would speed up the passage of tax measures being sought by Malacañang.

"We voted for the revenue measures because these are needed by the country. But at the same time, we also want to see that we

WE PASSED/ A22

9 survivors rescued 38 days after tsunami on remote island

NEW DELHI—Nine tribespeople who survived the December tsunami spent 38 days wandering through flattened villages on a remote Indian island, eating boars and coconuts, before police found them Wednesday.

Five men, two women and two girls were discovered in a forest on Campbell Bay island by police searching for people still missing after the Dec. 26 disaster that killed tens of thousands around the Indian Ocean.

The oldest survivor was a 65-year-old man; the youngest an 11-year-old girl, Insp. Shaukat Hussain said in a telephone interview from Campbell Bay, the only town in Great Nicobar, India's southernmost island where they

9 SURVIVORS/ A10

Bush applauded 61 times in 53 minutes

WASHINGTON—Laying out his second-term agenda in his State of the Union speech late Wednesday, US President George W. Bush pledged to confront governments that promote terror and pursue weapons of mass destruction.

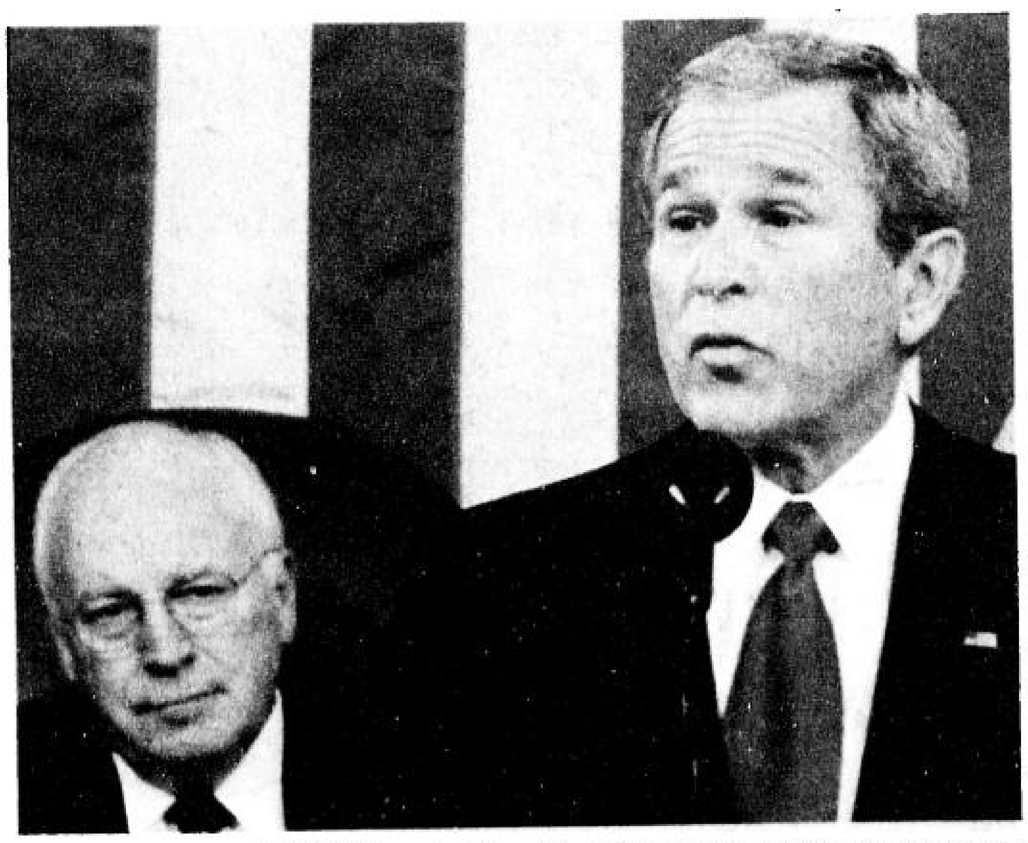
Speaking to a joint session of the US Congress and a television audience of millions, Bush hailed the success of elections in Iraq as proof of democracy's march and promised to push forward an overall Middle East peace plan, including an offer of $350 million in aid to the Palestinians.

Bush's 53-minute speech, which was interrupted by applause 61 times, dealt with problems at home and abroad. But it was the first of his annual State of the Union addresses to focus most heavily on domestic issues since the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks on the United States.

Despite Democrats' criticism, Bush offered no hint of a timetable for a troop withdrawal from Iraq.

The longest applause was when Bush recognized Janet and Bill Norwood, the parents of Marine Sgt. Byron Norwood of Pflugerville, Texas, who was killed in the assault on the Iraqi insurgent stronghold of Fallujah. In an emotional gesture, Janet Norwood hugged Safia Taleb al-Suhail, leader of the Iraqi Women's Political Council and daughter of an Iraqi man slain by Saddam Hussein's secret police in 1996.

BUSH/ A22



PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH delivers the State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress at the US Capitol in Washington on Wednesday. Vice President Dick Cheney is behind Bush. REUTERS

Second FrontPage

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers or thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: CHONA GALANG, PDI RESEARCH/02/04/05

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	**Roxas**	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	**Cebu**	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	**Tacloban**	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	**Gen. Santos**	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	**Zamboanga**	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	**Cagayan de Oro**	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	**Davao**	Cloudy with Rains

Big-time loggers charged

By Philip C. Tubeza

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Michael Defensor yesterday formally charged before the justice department 19 individuals and two corporations for allegedly engaging in the illegal logging activities that caused the devastating floods in Quezon and Aurora provinces in November and December.

Defensor said he would also file administrative charges against 15 barangay officials for failing to cooperate with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in going after the illegal loggers.

He said that with the filing of the criminal cases, he was serving notice to "big-time illegal loggers, their financiers, government officials and even ordinary folk who dare to violate our forestry laws."

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said his department was also studying whether to charge the respondents with economic sabotage.

"These terrible floods, while partly to be blamed on natural circumstances, could have wrought havoc on lives and properties if logging companies and their protectors showed even small mercy to our people," Defensor said.

Charged were Green Circle Co. and its owner, lawyer Romeo Roxas, his son RJ, manager Allan Tan, associate Ben Cheng and an engineer surnamed Dagul; Inter-Pacific Forest Resources Corp (IFRC), which Cheng owns; and Totoy Ang of Kasibu Sawmill.

They were charged with violating Presidential Decree No. 705, or the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines. A bailable offense, illegal logging carries a penalty of six to 20 years imprisonment, plus payment of fines which depend on the value of the wood seized.

Also charged were Wilson Ng, who was allegedly involved in the purchase of illegal logs in General Nakar, Quezon; Jessie Pua, the owner of the trucks that loaded the illegally cut logs; and brothers William and Wilson Marquez, who were identified by Infanta residents as financiers of illegal logging activities in their communities.

They were given 10 days to file their counteraffidavits.

"We are going to prioritize these cases. I have already created a task force for this," Gonzalez said.

According to Defensor, Green Circle owns 75,000 hectares of property for logging and sawmill operations, while the IFRC, believed to be a subcontractor of Green Circle, has 39,000 hectares.

He said the firms were engaged in illegal logging because they were operating outside their concession areas.

Defensor said the DENR also discovered that about 70 percent of people living in communities along the banks of the Umiray River in Gen. Nakar were involved in one way or another with illegal loggers, hence the decision to file administrative charges against the 15 barangay officials.

In a related development, Sorsogon Gov. Raul Lee was yesterday reported to have filed a complaint against Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago with the Senate ethics committee for the "sweeping accusations" against Lee and several other governors that the senator made in a privilege speech on illegal logging last Monday.

As of press time, however, Lee had not turned up at the Senate to file the complaint although advanced copies of it were distributed to reporters.

Lee was said to have been in a huddle with the 75-member League of Provinces of the Philippines which was said to be discussing whether to support his complaint against Santiago.

In her speech, Santiago identified 43 incumbent and former governors whom she held responsible for the prevalence of illegal logging activities in 25 provinces.

Lee said Santiago's accusations were "pure trash" and "[smacked] of congressional thuggery hiding behind parliamentary immunity."

He asked the ethics committee "to call the attention of Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago because, from the looks of it, she doesn't know what ethics is all about." *With a report from Chrisitine Avendaño*

Pinoys live high-risk lifestyles, says survey

By Nikko Dizon

SMOKING ranks first among the top risk factors in the Philippines that could lead to death from cardiovascular diseases such as stroke and heart attack, according to a nationwide nutrition health survey released yesterday.

The results of the landmark 2003-2004 National Nutrition Health Survey showed that besides smoking, high cholesterol, diabetes, obesity and hypertension were other risk factors that both the medical community and government should address.

The studies showed that cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) accounted for 76 out of 100,000 deaths among Filipinos annually. CVDs are commonly caused by atherosclerosis, or the narrowing of blood vessels due to fat deposits in the artery walls.

"Smoking by itself is a very important risk factor. It should make us think that we (doctors) spend so much time treating hypertension [and other diseases], but we spend so little time (addressing the) smoking (problem)," said Dr. Antonio Dans of the University of the Philippines-Philippine General Hospital (UP-PGH) during a presentation of the survey results at a convention held in Mandaluyong City.

Dans headed the technical working group of the survey that was jointly organized and funded by the Philippine Society of Hypertension and Philippine Lipid Society, the Department of Health, the Food and Nutrition Research Institute of the Department of Science and Technology, and 14 other medical associations.

The survey yielded the first of such data in the country that could pave the way for further studies to effectively address health concerns of Filipinos, said Dr. Dante Morales, one of the prime movers of the survey.

Of the 4,750 participants aged 20 years old and above, 34.8 percent were smokers, 17.4 percent were hypertensive, 8.5 percent had high cholesterol, 4.5 percent were diabetic, and 12 percent of male and 54 percent of women were obese.

The survey also showed that 90 percent of Filipino adults had at least one of the five risk factors, according to Dans.

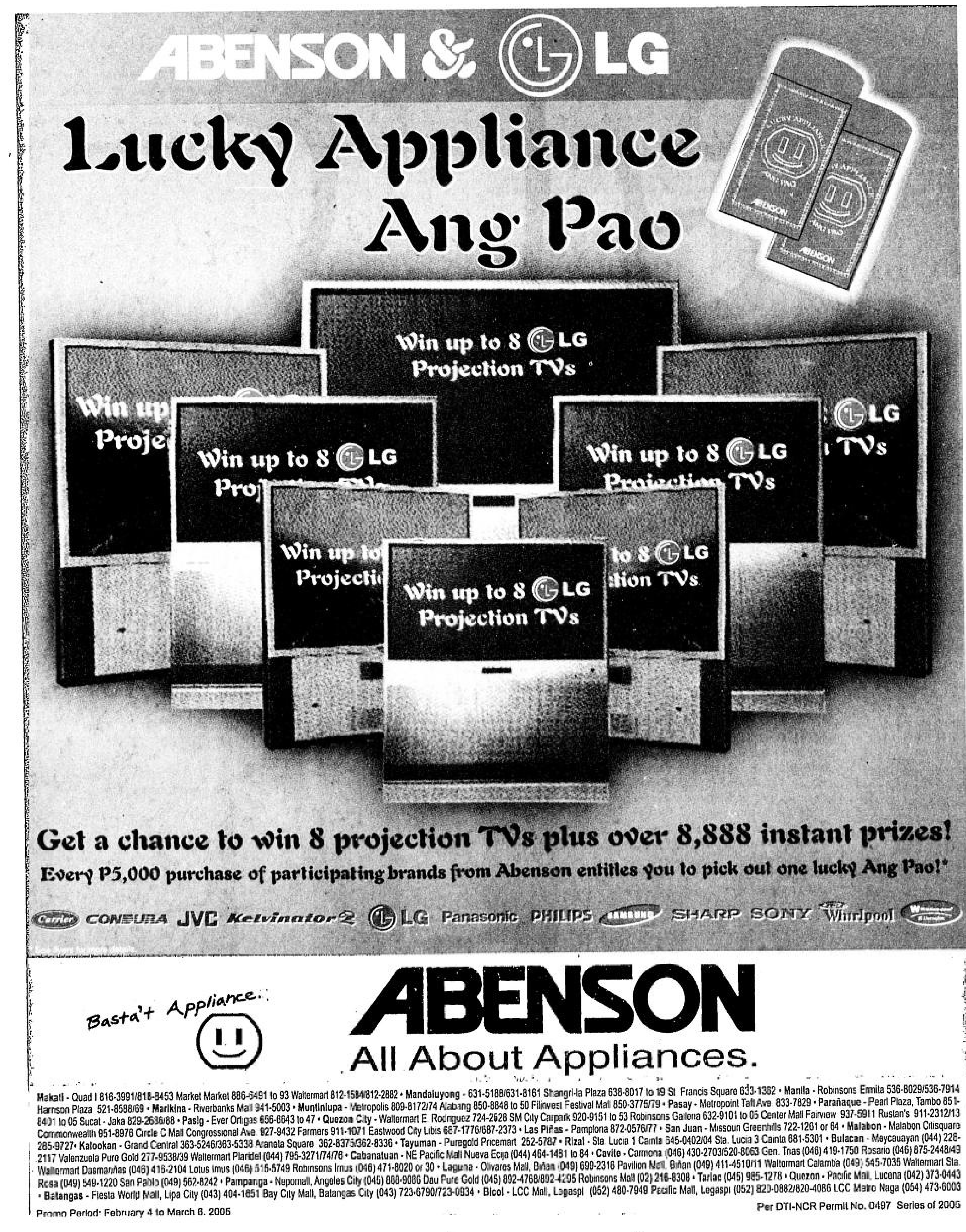
Dans, Morales and the other presenters in the forum said the leading risk factors, particularly smoking, simply reflected the poor lifestyle choices of Filipinos as well as the lack of political will by the government to deal with smoking.

"We are outnumbered and out-moneyed by tobacco companies and lobbyists. It's like a David-versus-Goliath situation," Dans said.

"This only shows the inefficiency of the government's smoking cessation program," he added.

However, Frances Priscilla Cuevas of the National League of Philippine Government Nurses Inc. defended the government, saying it was "making headway in the fight against smoking."

Besides the enactment of the Tobacco Regulation Act, Cuevas said, the government had begun setting up "smoking cessation clinics." The Philippine Lung Center, PGH and some regional hospitals are now home to such clinics, according to Cuevas.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Cops say they're close to solving Pagadian slay

PAGADIAN CITY—Regional police authorities here said they were "on the verge of solving" the killing of Edgar Amoro, an eyewitness in the 2002 murder of journalist Edgar Damalerio.

Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, the Western Mindanao police chief, said one of the three suspects was identified by two witnesses who saw Amoro being gunned down just outside the gate of the Zamboanga del Sur National High School here last Wednesday.

"We are about to solve the puzzle," Querol said.

He said the witnesses were able to identify one of the suspects "through description, artist sketch and presentation of a gallery of police characters."

Local police authorities also confirmed that they they were building up a case against the suspects.

Amoro, 46, was shot by three unidentified men as he stepped out of the ZSNHS where he was a teacher of English early last Wednesday.

Amoro and Edgar Onggue had witnessed the murder of Damalerio who was gunned down on May 13, 2002.

The two identified a police officer, Guillermo Wapile, as the alleged gunman. Wapile is now detained at the city reformatory center here.

'Tight case'

Senior Supt. Karib Muammil, the Zamboanga del Sur provincial police chief, said the authorities would be filing charges as soon as they have built "a tight case" against the suspects. He said he could not identify the suspects as it might affect the investigation and follow-up operations.

Police also requested the media not to release the cartographic sketches of the suspects.

The police have invited several people, including the school's security guards, three civilian traffic volunteers, a number of students and teachers, and other civilians who witnessed the killing.

"The attack was carried out in the presence of students and teachers. It was already noon break, so a lot of us witnessed the incident," a student told the INQUIRER.

"I saw how the suspects pumped bullets [into] his head and in different parts of his body," the student said, adding that the suspects continued shooting even as Amoro lay slumped on the pavement.

One of the gunmen, the student said, stared at him after shooting Amoro.

Media groups and the families of slain journalists have raised fears for the safety of witnesses in other cases after the Amoro killing.

Witnesses to the murders of two other journalists, broadcasters Herson Hinolan and Rolando Ureta, in Aklan province cannot yet be admitted to the government's witness protection program because the cases are still in the preliminary investigation stage.

"Witnesses won't be placed in the program unless they first tell their story, but how can they tell what they know if they still are not protected? It's the whole chicken-and-egg problem all over again," said Inday Espina-Varona, chair of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines. *Hernan P. dela Cruz and Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau; Nestor P. Burgos, PDI Visayas Bureau, and Norman Bordadora, Metro Manila*

Senators won't do the Cha-cha

By Christine O. Avendaño and Juliet Labog-Javellana

DON'T expect the Senate to dance to the House's cha-cha tune at this time.

Reacting to a recent House committee move to place Charter change in the chamber's agenda, Senate President Franklin Drilon yesterday said the Senate's legislative calendar did not include taking up the proposal to amend the 1987 Constitution.

"We are prioritizing what we think are solutions to our economic problems," Drilon said in Filipino.

He said the senators were busy with discussions on the proposed 2005 national budget as well as revenue-raising and deficit-reducing measures.

He noted that President Macapagal-Arroyo wanted Congress to approve the tax measures designed to cope with the country's fiscal problems.

Earlier this week, the House committee on constitutional amendments passed a proposal for a resolution calling for House and Senate members to constitute themselves into a constituent assembly to introduce and approve changes to the Constitution.

The move was immediately assailed by administration Senators Joker Arroyo and Miriam Defensor-Santiago who questioned the timing of the proposal when senators were busy deliberating on the bill to increase the value-added tax rate.

The constituent assembly proposal needs to go through the Senate for approval.

Malacañang advised the House members to postpone deliberations on Charter change until after all proposed tax measures aimed at solving the country's fiscal problems were passed.

Yesterday, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the congressmen did not even need to wait for the one-year moratorium against all Charter change talk to lapse before tackling Cha-cha for as long as they deliver the measures needed to reach the P80 billion additional revenue target.

Only after those tax measures are passed can they consider political legislation like Cha-cha, Ermita said.

In July 2004, the President, Drilon and Speaker Jose de Venecia agreed to shelve the issue of Charter change to concentrate on needed legislation to contain the budget deficit.

Ermita said Ms Arroyo would convene a meeting of the joint Legislative-Executive Advisory Council when she believes the P80 billion target was capable of being met.

Presidential Adviser Gabriel Claudio, who acts as Malacañang's legislative liaison, said the Palace was not even looking anymore at how many of the eight tax measures it submitted can be passed but on the amount that can be raised from whatever measures are approved.

Claudio said the Palace was hoping that the VAT bill, which is expected to bring in the bulk of the targeted P80 billion, can be passed before Congress breaks for Lent on March 19.

But he said it would be premature to speculate that deliberations on the Cha-cha can start as soon as the VAT measure is passed, or when Congress sessions resume on April 11.

"To speculate on the timetable, form and substance of Charter change now is therefore only counterproductive," Claudio said.

2 Europeans rescued off Boracay

TWO EUROPEANS vacationing on Boracay island in Aklan were rescued after their small sailboat capsized when it was swamped by waves on Wednesday afternoon.

A passing vessel spotted 47-year-old German national Holger Berlet and 41-year-old Swiss national Stephan Joller and plucked them out of the water after they drifted for two hours.

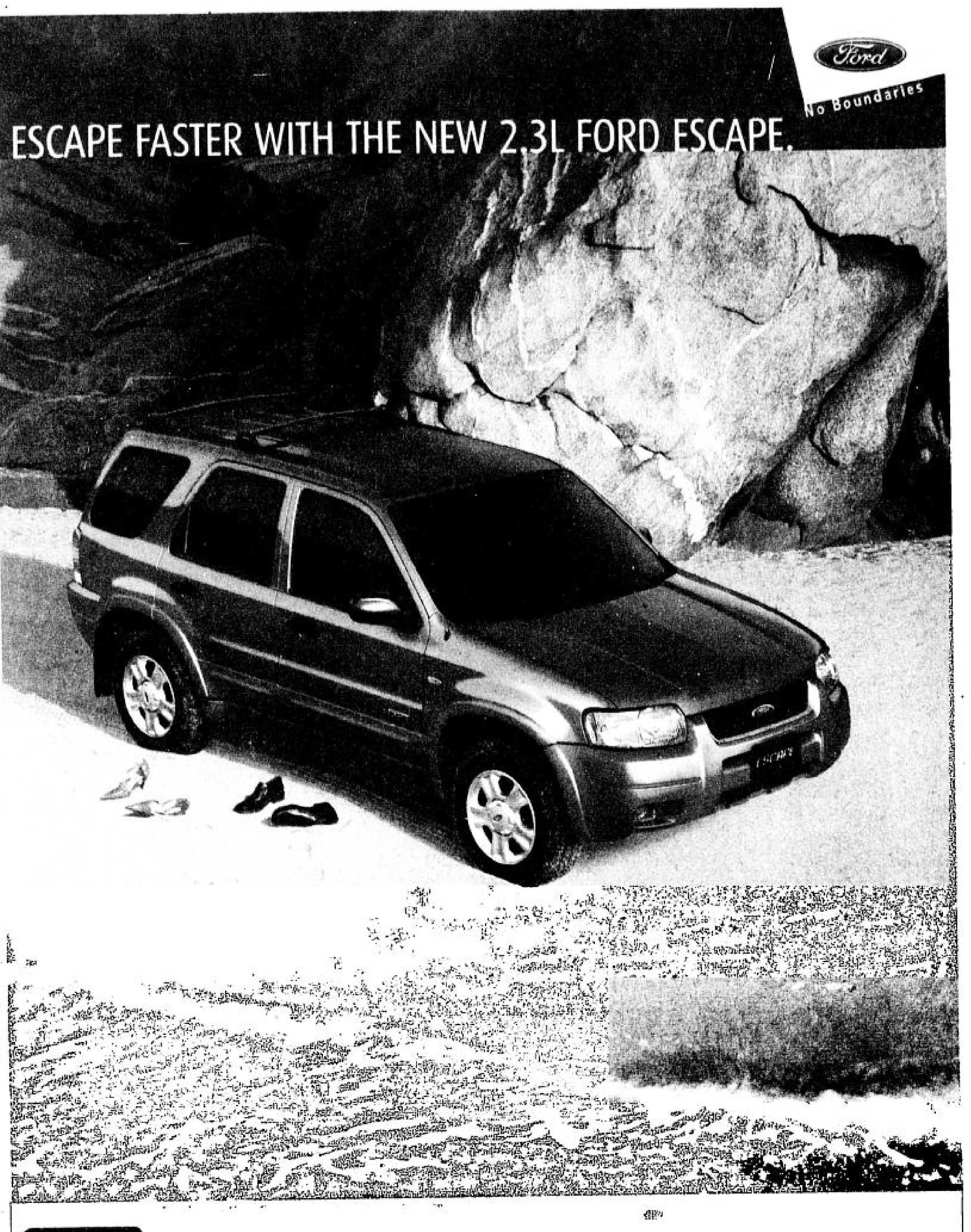
The Coast Guard said the two tourists rented the two-seater boat on Wednesday to sail on the waters off Boracay, a popular tourist destination famed for its beaches. But the water became rough and at around 3 p.m. a wave overturned the boat and knocked the two into the water.

The two tourists had been drifting for two hours on the waters off the western portion of the island when they were spotted by the M/V Maria Felisa, a roll-on, roll-off vessel bound for Roxas in Mindoro.

They were taken aboard and later brought back to Boracay, where they were reported to be in good condition. They suffered no serious injuries, said Coast Guard spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo.

The island had been hosting a steady stream of foreign tourists after tsunamis swamped South Asian countries and ravaged beach resorts a day after Christmas, leaving hundreds of thousands of people dead.

Leila Salaverria



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Arrest warrant out for GMA foe

By Philip C. Tubeza

LINDA Olaguer-Montayre, a staunch critic of President Macapagal-Arroyo, is facing arrest in connection with an alleged plot to overthrow the government days before her inauguration for a fresh six-year term last June 30.

The arrest order, issued on Jan. 3 by Quezon City Judge Maria Theresa de la Torre-Yadao, sought the apprehension of Montayre on charges of rebellion filed against her by the Department of Justice last September. Rebellion is a nonbailable offense.

The copy of the arrest order was released to the media only yesterday by government prosecutors.

Montayre, a former nun and secretary general of the Philippine Consultative Assembly, was allegedly one of the brains behind the plot to thwart Ms Arroyo's inauguration last year through bombings and assassinations of Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker Jose De Venecia.

State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco said the alleged plot was uncovered in the last week of June after bombs were found before they were detonated at the Department of Interior and Local Government building in Quezon City, the Department of Defense building in Camp Aguinaldo, and the Santuario de San Antonio Parish in Forbes Park, Makati City.

More credible witnesses

Velasco said the case against Montayre was based on sworn statements of lawyer Roberto Camarista, William B. Ramos and Wilfredo Diamante, who were earlier charged with rebellion. The DOJ wanted them to turn state witnesses.

"A clear analysis of the evidence presented by all parties shows that the allegations of respondents Camarista, Ramos and Diamante are more credible and logical than the bare denials of respondent Montayre," Velasco said.

In his signed affidavit, Camarista claimed that it was Montayre who "actually planned, directed and provided logistical means" to ensure that the plot was successful.

Cristina Gonzalez-Romualdez:
"Slimming Pills? Surgery? No Way!"

"All my life, I've always been slim. But after giving birth, it became such a problem to lose the extra weight that I needed help. Going on a diet didn't really work. I've heard so many horror stories about diet pills. I didn't want anything invasive like surgery. But with Marie France, I lost 20 lbs in just one month! Now I'm more active, I feel better, lighter and healthier. Marie France is my way to losing weight effortlessly. Make it yours, too!"

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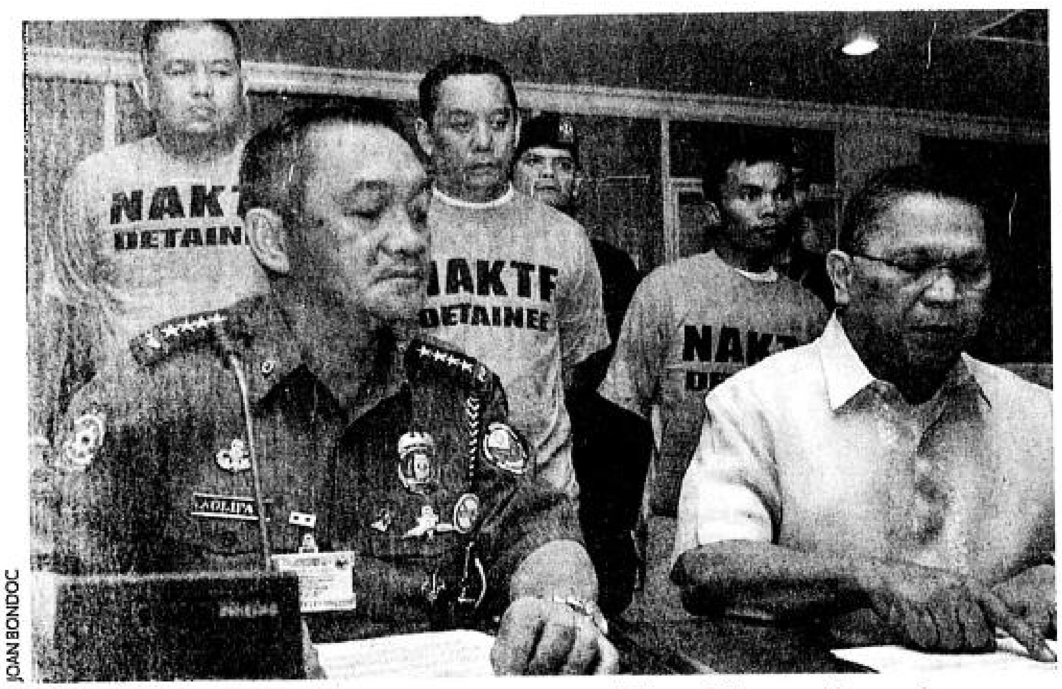
JOAN BONDOC

JOAN BONDOC

DILG Secretary Angelo Reyes and PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay preside over the presentation of an alleged kidnap for ransom gang led by Martin Soriano (behind) flanked by Ramiro Ganzon and Danny Rendon. Seven other members of the gang are being hunted down.

Correction

IN THE FEB. 3 issue, a Metro story on Page A17—"Hospital denies holding widow's body"—misstated the name of the Pasig City General Hospital administrator. The hospital administrator's name is Horacio—not Honoracio—Apuyan Jr.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to Gerry Lirio, city editor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City; fax Nos. 897-4793/94; e-mail addresses:glirio@inquirer.com.ph and daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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'Top cops protecting ex-NBI agent'

From page A1

rested him on Monday in Quezon City in connection with the kidnapping of 23-year-old Caroline Guillen in Makati City on Jan. 28.

Ranking PNP officer

Director Robert Delfin, chief of the Philippine National Police's Directorate for Intelligence, cited reports that a ranking PNP officer was involved in Soriano's kidnapping operations.

He said the reports were being verified in coordination with the NCRPO.

According to Guillen's friend James Marty Lim, who had negotiated with Soriano for her release, the ex-agent himself told investigators during interrogation that a number of Manila policemen were involved in his operations.

"Martin said he had clearance from some police officers," Lim told the INQUIRER.

He said he himself knew the identity of the police officers, whom he described as "notorious."

"I have passed on the information to investigators," he added.

According to a Pacer report, copies of which were distributed to reporters, Soriano and his group were involved in a series of kidnappings in Metro Manila over the last few years.

"[They] are preying on wealthy personalities and businessmen, [whom they accuse] of committing drug offenses and other serious crimes for the purpose of extorting money from the victims," the report said.

God's gift to women

The press conference yesterday took a dramatic turn when former anti-narcotics agent Mary "Rosebud" Ong appeared and claimed that Soriano kidnapped her and her mother in May 1998.

She walked up to Soriano and punched him twice in the face.

"Until today, I have nightmares of how he treated me," said Ong, her voice cracking with emotion.

She said she and her mother were held in separate rooms and made to watch as Soriano and his cohorts repeatedly cocked their guns. She said she was interrogated and beaten inside a dark room.

"[Soriano] thinks he is God's gift to women," she said.

Ong accused Soriano of taking all of her money and ATM cards, and then demanding more money. She said she was released only after her former "handler," the late John Campos, spoke with Soriano.

Ong also said she would file charges against Soriano for the alleged kidnapping.

Off-limits

NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco said Soriano was dismissed from the bureau on April 28, 1999.

"I checked his status and I found that the authority given him by the NBI has been rescinded and terminated. I also declared him off-limits to all NBI agents in the country. If it is found that he used the NBI's name in his operations, we will charge him with usurpation of authority," Wycoco said.

PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay added that Soriano was not a member of the Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Task Force, the PNP's main anti-narcotics unit.

Soriano made headlines in 1997 when he linked then Sen. Vicente Sotto to alleged drug lord Alfredo Tiongco. He claimed that Tiongco contributed P6 million for the publication of Sotto's book, "Vision of a Drug-Free Philippines."

He was also implicated in the disappearance of Nicolas Ruiz, a lawyer of Tiongco and suspected drug lord Florencio Parena, in July 1997.

False arrest

Guillen, of Ayala Heights, Quezon City, said she was "arrested" by Soriano and nine others for possession of illegal drugs. She said they held her captive in Room 3105 of the Citadel Inn on P. Burgos Street in Makati.

Soriano allegedly demanded P2 million from Lim as a condition for Guillen's release, and later agreed to Lim's counteroffer of a green Isuzu Crosswind AUV and $1,600 in cash.

The payoff, according to the NCRPO, occurred at around 10 p.m. on Jan. 28, four hours after the abduction. Guillen was released unharmed an hour after the payoff.

Soriano was alleged to have also demanded an extra P200,000 from Lim, who later sought the help of the Pacer, the PNP's main antikidnapping unit.

Soriano and two companions were arrested near a pizza house on Tomas Morato Street in Quezon City.

Ehem! 'Saints' . . .

From page A1

A number of them wearing expensive Lacoste shirts and carrying top-of-the-line mobile phones like the XDAII, they blamed everyone or everything else but themselves for the prevailing graft and corruption.

LTFRB chair Maria Elena Bautista sat quietly at first, observing the close to 40 regional officials who were not coy about expressing their views on the supposedly corrupt ways of their peers in the government.

After lunch, during that portion of the seminar where the causes of corruption and vulnerable areas of operation were identified, Cotabato Director Sindatuk Ulama declared: "*Wala namang corruption dito* (There's no corruption here)!"

This appeared to be too much for Bautista, who cut him off, saying: "Please don't pretend to be a saint!"

'Ehem!'

During the lunch break in the two-day seminar sought by Bautista herself, she disclosed that she and her staff had been trying to reform the agency, which, according to a recent survey, was among the graft-prone offices in the country.

The seminar series dubbed "Ehem!" was initiated by the Philippine Jesuits' Committee on the Evangelization of Culture. In the past two years, the committee has conducted about 150 seminars for some 15,000 persons from the government, private and religious groups, and the academe.

Ateneo de Davao University professor Ronnie V. Amorado said the seminar was intended to awaken people to the pervasive problem of graft and lead them to realize that the problem was not entirely hopeless.

According to Amorado, the seminar serves as a supplement to the government's lifestyle check and electronic procurement measures, in that it teaches people to go back to positive values and rely on themselves—and not on anybody watching them—to stop graft.

"'Ehem!' makes people feel uncomfortable enough about graft to do something about it," he said.

He lamented that core Filipino values such as *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) had been corrupted to justify the commission of graft.

Insensitivity

"Graft is pervasive not because we are inherently corrupt but because we have become insensitive to [it]," Amorado said at the seminar.

He cited incidents when an official receives a gift without considering it a form of bribery.

At this point, Bautista told the officials present: "It's in our code of ethics— accepting gifts [is not allowed]."

Ulama blamed graft on the lack of law enforcement, pointing out that during the late Ferdinand Marcos' strongman rule, people were afraid to commit graft.

But now, graft is rampant, specially in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, he said.

Other LTFRB officials said the problem was that gift-giving was "an integral part of Filipino culture."

'Nakakahiya'

Region 10 Director Manny Darimbang said Filipinos had forgotten the word *nakakahiya* (shameful).

"Corrupt officials flaunt their Pajeros without fear or shame," he said.

Still other officials attributed the graft problem to certain people's insatiable desire for material wealth, the low government pay, the supposed bad example set by lawmakers with their pork barrel funds; and the lack of faith in God or Allah.

Region 6 Director Porfirio Clavel Jr. summed up the behavior of corrupt officials by taking off from President Manuel L. Quezon's famous statement, "My loyalty to my party ends where my loyalty to my country begins."

Clavel's take on the supposed dictum of corrupt officials: "My loyalty to my country ends where my loyalty to my stomach begins."

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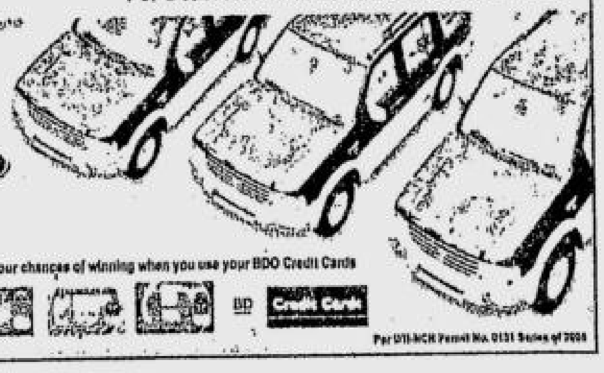

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DIPLOMATIC PUSH

Romulo in Tokyo to plead case of RP entertainers

TOKYO—Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo arrived Thursday to press Japan not to jeopardize the livelihood of legal Filipino workers amid a crackdown on sex trafficking.

Romulo will also hold talks to push forward a free trade agreement which the two countries want to finalize this year.

The Japanese Embassy in Manila has been the scene of regular protests since Tokyo announced it would impose tougher requirements for "entertainer" visas—which have been used to lure Filipinas into sexual slavery.

"We share the desire of the Japanese government to fight human trafficking and the victimization of our workers," Romulo said in a statement on his trip.

"I will meet with Japanese officials to ensure that the new immigration measures taken by Japan do not adversely affect the interests of our legitimate workers, particularly those already working in Japan," he said.

Romulo was to have a working dinner Thursday with Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura at the start of his three-day visit, the Philippine Embassy said.

Nearly 300,000 Filipinos work in Japan, many in bars and other nightspots. They are part of the Philippines' vast overseas labor force whose billions of dollars remitted each year are equivalent to 11 percent of the country's domestic economic output.

Japan has vowed action after close ally the United States in June placed it on a watchlist of nations with problems in human trafficking.

Japan plans to restrict entertainment visas to people with two years' training outside Japan or at foreign educational institutes.

On Thursday, police said they also aimed to require businesses to prove that foreign employees had work permits. They hope to ban fliers sent to homes advertising the sex trade, which is illegal but widely available in Japan.

Romulo was also due to meet Trade Minister Shoichi Nakagawa for talks on the free trade deal, which would ease regulations on Filipino nurses and other caregivers entering Japan.

President Macapagal-Arroyo and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi agreed on basic points of a trade pact in November on the sidelines of a regional summit in Laos.

AFP

Protesters picket Malaysian Embassy

PROTESTERS picketed the Malaysian Embassy yesterday against Kuala Lumpur's planned crackdown on hundreds of thousands of illegal migrants from the Philippines and other Asian countries.

"Migrants are humans, not animals," read a poster held by one of three dozen protesters.

Malaysian officials said more than half a million illegal migrants, mostly Indonesians and Filipinos, ignored a Jan. 31 amnesty deadline to leave the country and risked being whipped, fined and jailed before being deported.

But Malaysia has temporarily scaled down the crackdown, with authorities instead planning to persuade them to leave voluntarily.

"For migrant workers, a reign of terror will surely mark the next few weeks and months. (Malaysian) Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi must end this nightmare before it begins," said Maita Santiago, secretary general of militant group Migrante International.

Santiago said illegal workers also contribute to the Malaysian economy.

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo on Wednesday appealed to Filipinos living illegally in Malaysia to return home.

The Malaysian police estimates there are about 170,000 undocumented Filipinos in Sabah state alone, the Department of Foreign Affairs said.

The deportation of thousands of illegal workers in 2002 caused tension between Manila and Kuala Lumpur. The Philippines lodged a diplomatic protest over alleged torture and violation of deportees' human rights.

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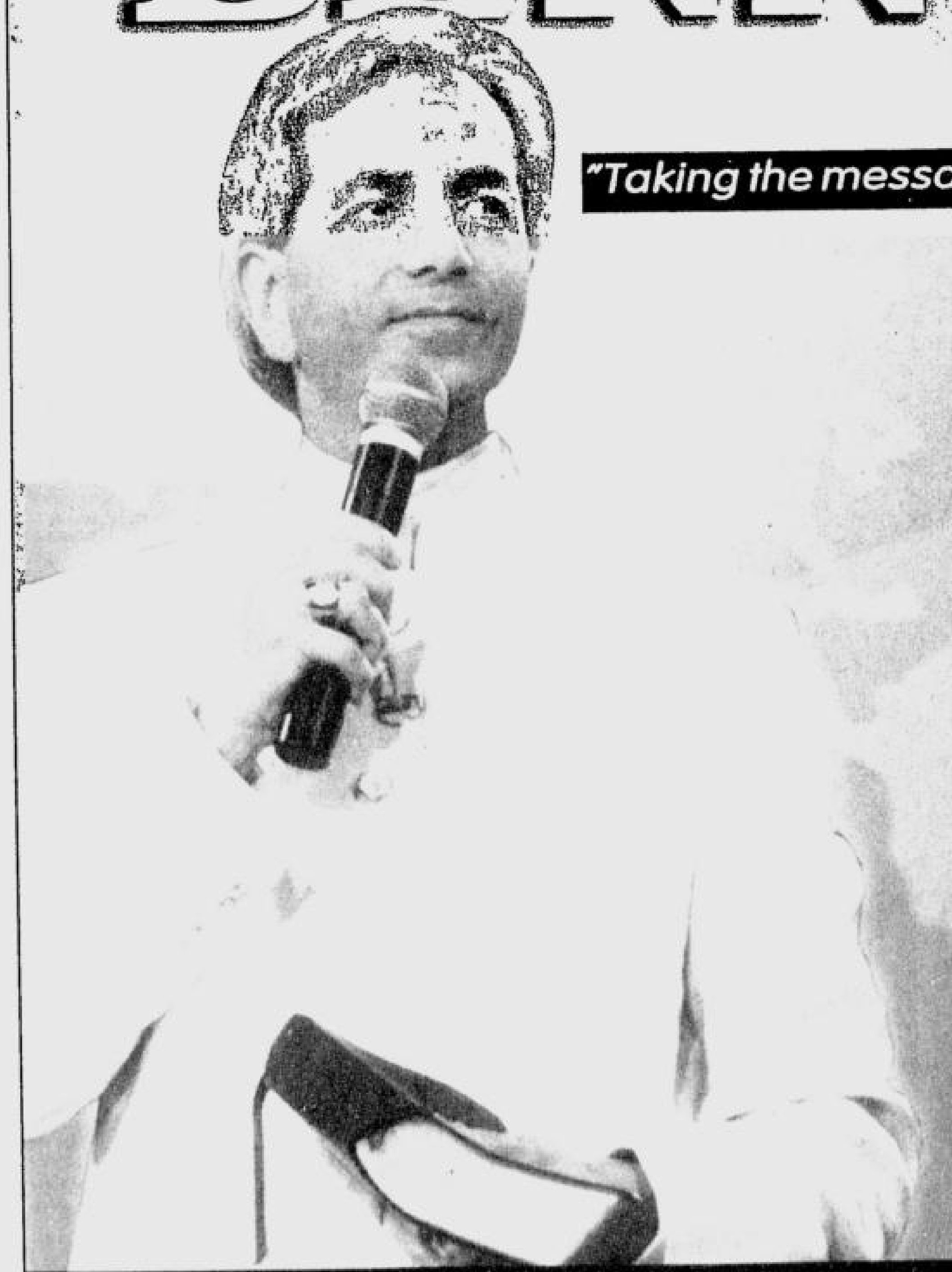

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Ceasefire monitors optimistic about peace talks

MARAWI CITY—The Malaysian head of an international team monitoring a ceasefire agreement between the Philippine government and Muslim separatist rebels expressed optimism yesterday that peace talks on ending the insurgency would succeed.

"The current ceasefire is holding well and the peace process is very much on track," Maj. Gen. Zulkifeli bin Mohd Zin told about 5,000 people who attended a rally in support of the peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Sporadic clashes, including an attack by renegade rebels that killed six soldiers last month, have shaken the 18-month-old truce, but both sides have said the peace negotiations have not been affected.

"The peace momentum is now getting to be much stronger. If the current trend prevails, the people of the Philippines and those living in the region should be able to see a bright light at the end of the tunnel soon," Zulkifeli said in his first public comments on the talks since his arrival in October.

In Manila, President Macapagal-Arroyo's spokesperson, Ignacio Bunye, also expressed optimism.

"There is a common vision of peace jelling in the communities, backed by a strong air of anticipation in the international community," Bunye said in a statement.

On Wednesday, the chief government peace negotiator, Silvestre Afable III, said talks hosted by Malaysia will resume later this month in Kuala Lumpur.

He said the two sides will begin tackling the "most contentious" issue in ending the decades-long armed struggle for a separate Muslim homeland in the southern Philippines. They will discuss "ancestral domain," which includes property and cultural rights of ethnic Muslim tribes, exercise of political power, management of natural resources and identification of territory, he said.

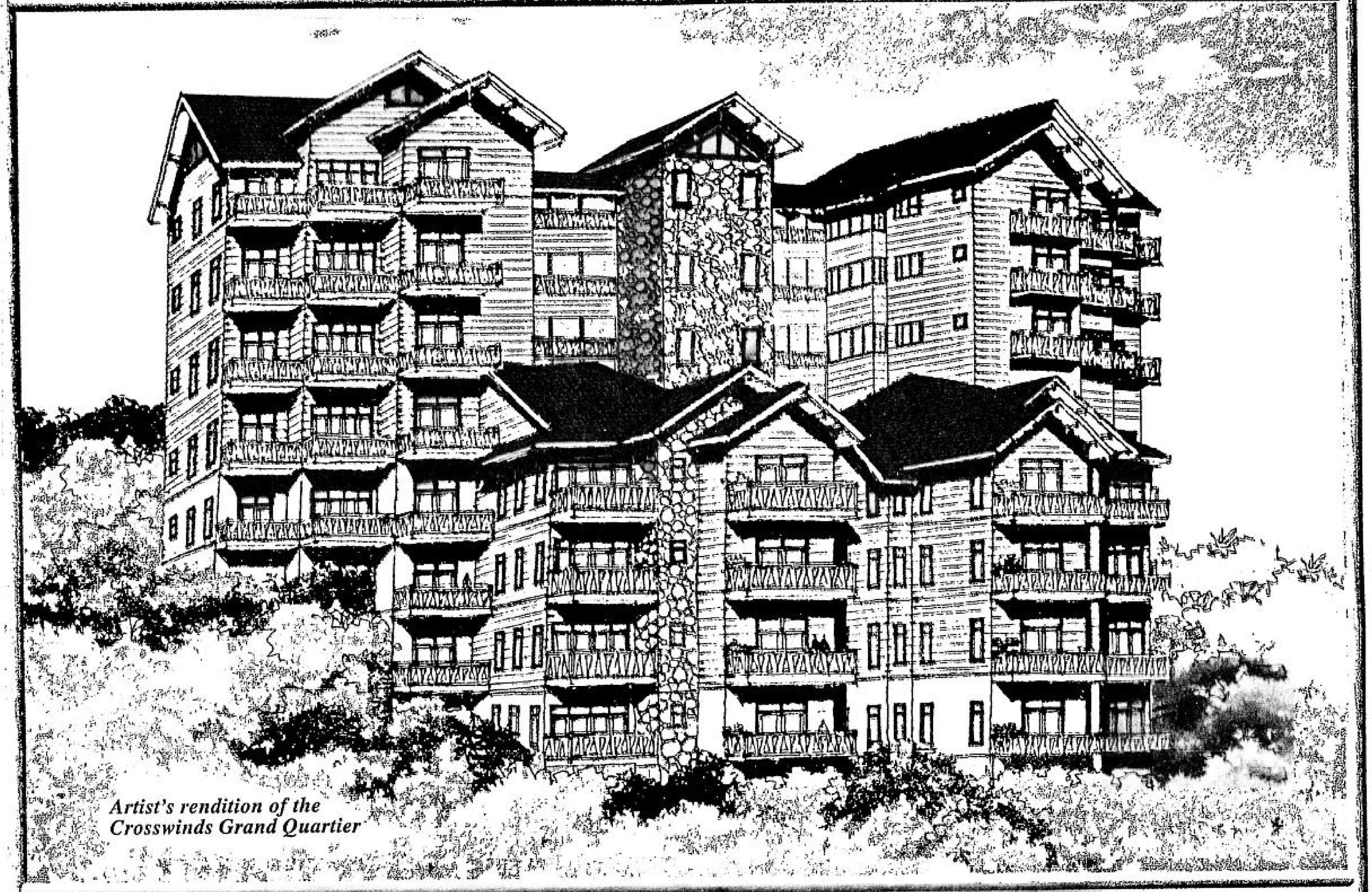
"Once we hurdle this issue, the negotiation will just coast to a peaceful conclusion," he told reporters in Manila.

However, Afable said terrorist groups like Jemaah Islamiyah are likely to try to undermine the peace process if it shows signs of progress.

The 64 foreign ceasefire monitors consist of 50 Malaysians, 10 Bruneians and four Libyans. They are deployed in five different cities and monitor conflict areas in 15 provinces on the main southern island of Mindanao.

"I believe that by bringing the long and bitter conflict in Mindanao to closure through peaceful means, the people of the Philippines will be sending a powerful message to the international community that conflicts can be resolved through negotiated resolutions," Zulkifeli said.

Marines and police guarded the peace assembly in a park in Marawi. *AP*



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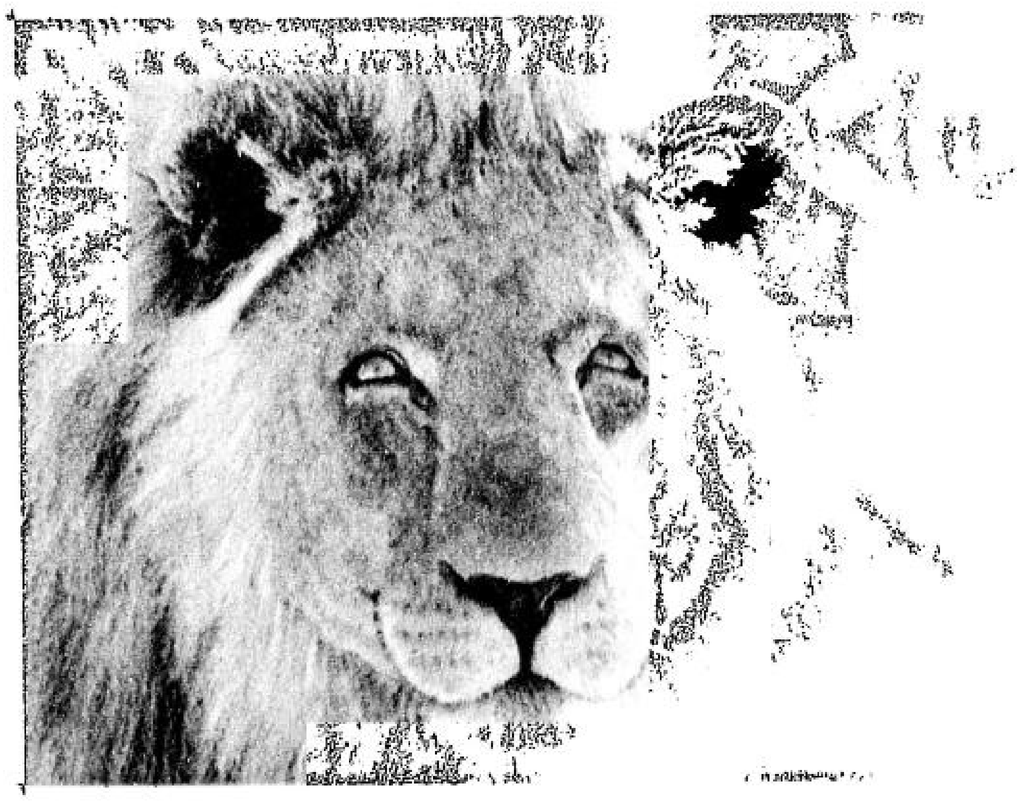

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Pope recovering well, says top Vatican official

From page A1

doctors were on guard for complications that could weaken the already frail Pontiff, who suffers from Parkinson's disease.

The Vatican said the 84-year-old Pope would spend the next few days at the Gemelli Polyclinic hospital after being admitted late Tuesday.

"The Pope has rested well," papal spokesperson Joaquin Navarro-Valls said Thursday after spending two hours in the Pope's hospital suite. "He rested well all night, and the laboratory tests that were made give a satisfactory result."

Bouncing back

"He's bouncing back," Italian Health Minister Girolamo Sirchia, a physician, told reporters on Wednesday evening after a visit to Gemelli. "We're optimistic. The doctors are optimistic."

The Pope is "recovering well," said Cardinal Angelo Sodano who, as secretary of state, is the Vatican's No. 2.

Sodano told private TV Canale 5 that the Pope's breathing problems could have been handled at the Vatican, where the Pope had been laid up since Sunday evening with the flu.

"But the Holy Father, as everybody, entrusts himself to the doctors," and the decision was made to hospitalize him, he said.

The Vatican said the Pope had suffered spasms of the larynx, making it difficult for him to breathe, and had an inflamed windpipe.

A medical bulletin on the Pope's condition was expected sometime around Thursday noon, after his second night in the hospital. The clinic was calm overnight, although police stayed on alert as hordes of reporters and photographers waited outside the hospital.

Before dawn, lights switched on in the clinic's 10th floor, where the Pontiff is staying in a special papal suite.

Worldwide well-wishers

Apprehension over the fate of the leader of the world's one billion Roman Catholics and one of the globe's best-known figures triggered an outpouring of well-wishes—from Franciscan friars in Italy to American teenagers in Florida.

The thoughts of the faithful turned to the Pope in the Philippines, one of the 129 countries that John Paul had visited in his 26-year-old papacy. He visited the Philippines twice.

Poles prayed for him in the church where he was baptized, while Mexicans gathered in churches to light candles. Franciscan friars in the crypt of St. Francis Basilica in Assisi, Italy, asked God to help the Pope in his suffering, while Catholic high school students in Pensacola, Florida, attended Mass in their gymnasium.

"If anything happens to him, God forbid, there would be a great loss to the world," said Bishop John H. Ricard, who heads the Pensacola-Tallahassee Diocese and celebrated the Mass. "So we are going to spend a great deal more time in prayer."

While anyone with the flu can develop respiratory complications, the elderly are especially vulnerable. Doctors also must guard against life-threatening complications, like pneumonia.

Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragan, head of the Vatican's health care office, told Associated Press Television News that the Pope's stooped posture keeps his lungs and diaphragm in a crushed position, a chronic obstacle to proper breathing.

Keeping the Pope hospitalized will afford "many means to stay ready for any complications," he said.

2 enviable factors

John Paul, battling Parkinson's disease as well as hip and knee ailments, has been in weak health for many years. But a leading Italian cardiologist, Attilio Maseri, who has treated the Pontiff during previous hospitalizations, said the Pope had two enviable factors on his side.

"He has exceptional cardiovascular function, guided by exceptional willpower," Maseri, now based in Milan's San Raffaele hospital, said on state TV early Thursday.

"If he overcomes the respiratory problems he's suffering, he'll certainly be able to go back doing what he was doing before," Maseri said.

The Pope felt well enough Wednesday to participate from his bed in a Mass celebrated by his secretary, Navarro-Valls said. He said John Paul was running a slight fever and would spend "a few more days" at Gemelli for treatment of respiratory problems.

No cause for alarm

"There is no cause for alarm," Navarro-Valls said.

George Weigel, the American biographer of Pope John Paul II, said he had been in contact with an unnamed Vatican staff member around the time the Pontiff was hospitalized. Papal aides see the hospital stay as a precaution, according to the staff member.

"They take the Pope to the hospital when he has a bad cold. Why? Because he was feeling bad," Weigel said. "You don't want to mess around with the health of a man with these underlying problems."

Strenuous pace

"It's easier to monitor this stuff and provide supportive therapy (in a hospital), and that's exactly what is going on," said Weigel, author of "Witness to Hope."

Although age and chronic health problems have slowed the Pontiff considerably from his whirlwind pace of the early years of his papacy, John Paul has kept a remarkably strenuous pace.

His average week is spent working on documents, making appointments, meeting world leaders and appearing before the public at least twice a week.

American Cardinal James Francis Stafford, who is based at the Vatican, said Church officials were working with concern and a spirit of prayer during the Pope's absence.

"We don't know how things will turn out—the Holy Father is 84 years old," he said, quoted in La Repubblica newspaper. "We don't know what trials God has prepared for him." *AP*

Filipinos urged to pray for Pope's recovery

REM ZAMORA

CATHOLICS worldwide pray for the recovery of the Pope like this Filipino Pink sister at the St.Joseph Convent of Perpetual Adoration.

JAIME Cardinal Sin, archbishop emeritus of Manila, yesterday asked Filipinos to pray for the swift recovery of Pope John Paul II who was rushed to the hospital late Tuesday due to respiratory problems.

"The deep concern we felt over the initial news that Pope John Paul II was taken to the hospital on Tuesday night has given way to relief and thanksgiving following the latest medical bulletins on his condition," Sin said in a statement released by his private secretary, Fr. Jun Sescon, through the Manila archdiocese.

"With the rest of the world, we await more positive developments as we continue our prayers for his swift recovery. I call on all the Filipino people, who have always had an exceptional closeness to the Holy Father and hold a special place in his heart to pray ever more fervently and offer sacrifices for these intentions," Sin said.

Sin led the Filipino faithful in welcoming the Pope during the latter's visit in 1981 for the beatification of Filipino martyr Lorenzo Ruiz, who has since been declared a saint, and in January 1995 for the World Youth Day, according to the Manila archdiocese spokesperson, Peachy Yamsuan. *Nikko Dizon*

Loveseats on sale.

This Valentine month, Summit Club members can redeem two award tickets for the mileage of one!

Mechanics:

1. From February 2 to March 15, 2005, all Summit Club members can redeem their award tickets for domestic routes at half the standard number of miles required. Please refer to the Award Ticket Redemption Chart. Mileage indicated per route is good for 1 pax.
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3. The following award ticket types may be availed of during the promo period:
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   - Round Trip award tickets
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4. Request for award tickets during this promo must be submitted at least 3 days prior to scheduled departure date.
5. Travel of award tickets for this promo must be completed on or before March 15, 2005.
6. Rerouting is not allowed. Rebooking is subject to a deduction of 150 PremiuMiles or PhP100 charge.
7. Processed requests may not be cancelled and recredited to a member's account.
8. For inquiries on how to redeem the award tickets, Summit Club members can call the toll-free number 1-800-1888-25-82 or 02-638-1746 for Manila.

Award Ticket Redemption Chart for Promo Period

ROUTE (vice-versa)	ONE-WAY	ROUND TRIP	ROUND TRIP (Companion)
Manila - Davao	3,250	6,000	5,000
Manila - Zamboanga	3,250	6,000	5,000
Manila - Cagayan	3,250	6,000	5,000
Manila - Butuan	3,250	6,000	5,000
Manila - Dumaguete	2,250	4,000	3,500
Manila - Tagbilaran	2,250	4,000	3,500
Manila - Puerto Princesa	2,250	4,000	3,500
Manila - Cebu	2,250	4,000	3,500
Manila - Tacloban	2,250	4,000	3,500
Cebu - Puerto Princesa	2,250	4,000	3,500
Manila - Bacolod	1,750	3,000	2,500
Manila - Iloilo	1,750	3,000	2,500
Cebu - Zamboanga	1,750	3,000	2,500
Manila - Roxas	1,750	3,000	2,500
Manila - Kalibo	1,750	3,000	2,500
Cebu - Davao	1,750	3,000	2,500
Cebu - Butuan	1,750	3,000	2,500
Iloilo - Cebu	1,750	3,000	2,500
Cebu - Bacolod	1,750	3,000	2,500
Davao - Zamboanga	1,750	3,000	2,500

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Credit rating cut ruled out

From page A1

P54.91 against the greenback.

Warning

But Standard Chartered warned that the government must sustain the "reform momentum" because a one-notch downgrade in the first half of the year should not be ruled out entirely.

"For this reason, we wouldn't be surprised if the Philippines remain on a 'negative watch' for the time being," the bank said.

Fears of a credit rating downgrade, which would make old and new borrowings more expensive, prompted Ms Arroyo to declare a fiscal crisis late last year in order to compel the government to undertake cost-cutting measures, lawmakers to pass new taxes, and the public to pay higher power rates.

Inadequate

Another credit rating agency, Standard & Poor's, cut by one notch on Jan. 17 the country's long-term currency debt because of the government's "inadequate" response to its fiscal problems.

Austerity measures yielded modest gains, lawmakers rejected the pork barrel cuts and passed only two of the proposed eight tax measures, and regulators approved only half of the rate increase sought by Napocor, according to S&P.

S&P lowered to BB- from BB the long-term foreign currency sovereign debt. It also lowered the long-term local currency sovereign credit rating to BB+ from BBB- and the short-term local currency debt rating to B from A-3.

Strong signal

Standard Chartered said that since the start of the year the President "has sent a strong signal that when push comes to shove, policymakers can produce constructive results."

The bank also said that "a positive start should be built upon for it to be meaningful."

It urged the government to continue to push for more new tax measures such as the increase in the value-added tax rate from 10 percent to 12 percent, to raise power rates, to continue Napocor's privatization, and to maintain frugal government spending.

Standard Chartered is the oldest foreign bank in the country.

Gov't warned of tax revolt

By Abigail L. Ho

THE GOVERNMENT may be in for yet another people power with the impending rise in prices of petroleum products and electricity due to the imposition of value-added tax (VAT) on oil products and independent power producers (IPPs).

The Consumer and Oil Price Watch (COPW) and the Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association (Ippca) both believe that Congress' move to scrap the VAT exemptions of petroleum and power industries would lead to a national outcry.

"Congress is courting a disaster of national proportions by lifting the exemption of oil products and independent power producers from the coverage of the expanded and increased VAT," Ippca executive director Rex Tantiongco said in a statement yesterday.

Based on Ippca's computations, Tantiongco said slapping a 12-percent VAT on petroleum products would translate to an increase of P2.30 a liter for diesel and P2.70 a liter for premium and unleaded gasoline.

He said there were ways other than lifting the VAT exemptions of the petroleum and power industries to raise revenues.

One such way would be to raise specific taxes on petroleum products. Just by jacking up excise taxes on diesel by 25 centavos a liter and on gasoline by 75 centavos a liter, government stands to earn some P10 billion a year, even higher than the P8 billion that the Department of Finance expects to fetch from removing the VAT exemption of petroleum products, according to Tantiongco.

While echoing Tantiongco's sentiments that nothing short of a "revolution" would take place when the net effect of the VAT impositions were felt by the masses, COPW chair Raul Concepcion said the VAT imposition on oil products would have less of an impact on consumers if the pass-on cost for diesel would be pegged at 60 centavos a liter.

A proposal at the House of Representatives aims to jack up excise taxes on all oil products, except cooking gas, by P2 a liter.

9 survivors rescued 38 days after tsunami on remote island

From page A1

were found.

The tsunami wiped out many villages on the island, part of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago some 225 km from Banda Aceh, the worst-hit area in Indonesia.

The nine survivors, members of the Nicobarese tribe, were found in the island's jungle interior while Hussain was leading a 12-member police team searching for bodies.

No hugging, tears

"We were in a combing operation," Hussain said. "They were sitting in the forest when we saw them, and they just ran to us, without saying anything. They seemed happy, yes, but there was no hugging and tears and shouting in joy and all that."

Two of the survivors were hospitalized for severe dehydration, while the others were brought to a relief camp. They were all residents of the island's Pillowbhabhi village on the island's western coast.

"They seemed weak but all right. They said they had eaten coconuts, boars and wild shoots. They hunted to stay alive," Hussain said. "We found them not too far from where we found a dead body which we cremated."

When the tsunami struck, the group raced to a hilltop on the island where they took shelter for days, before venturing down to look for relief, he said.

"They kept walking, they got lost, and were wandering in the forest, resting, then walking again," Hussain said.

How to make fire

An Indian government statement on the rescue said the only person the group of nine encountered during that time was a boy from the Shompen tribe, another group that inhabits the archipelago.

"The Shompen tribe boy taught them how to make fire from sticks," the statement said.

The Nicobarese, the largest of the indigenous tribes living in the archipelago, are used to a meager existence of foraging and hunting. However, they have suffered greatly from the tsunami because they lived along the coast.

Differing death tolls

The overall tsunami death toll ranges from about 158,000 to 178,000 across 11 nations hit by the disaster, reflecting differing agency tolls in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. With estimates of up to 142,000 missing, more than a quarter-million people may have been lost.

At least 10,749 people were killed by the tsunami in India, and at least 5,640 are missing, most of them on the remote Andaman and Nicobar archipelago. AP

SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

JUDICIAL ETHICS—Ignorance of the law—A judge owes it to himself and his office to know by heart basic legal principles and to harness his legal know-how correctly and justly. When a judge displays an utter unfamiliarity with the law and the rules, he erodes the confidence of the public in the courts. Ignorance of the law by a judge can easily be the mainspring of injustice. As an advocate of justice and a visible representation of the law, a judge is expected to be proficient in the interpretation of our laws. When the law is so elementary, not to know it constitutes gross ignorance of the law. Ignorance of the law, which everyone is bound to know, excuses no one—not even judges. Ignorantia juris quod quisque scire tenetur non excusat. Indeed, a judge should so behave at all times as to promote public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary. Furthermore, a judge should be the embodiment of competence, integrity and independence, and should uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Callejo, Sr., Second Division, Español vs Mupas, A.M. No. MTJ-01-1348]

BY R. B. VERA

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, February 4, 2005
4th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading:	**Heb 13:1-8**
Gospel:	**Mark 6:14-29**

King Herod also heard about Jesus because his name had become well-known. Some people said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." Others thought, "He is Elijah," and others, "He is a prophet like the prophets of times past." When Herod was told of this, he thought: "I had John beheaded, yet he has risen from the dead!"

For this is what had happened. Herod had ordered John to be arrested and had him bound and put in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. Herod had married her and John had told him, "It is not right for you to live with your brother's wife." So Herodias held a grudge against John and wanted to kill him, but she could not because Herod respected John. He knew John to be an upright and holy man and kept him safe. And he liked listening to him, although he became very disturbed whenever he heard him.

Herodias had her chance on Herod's birthday, when he gave a dinner for all the senior government officials, military chiefs and the leaders of Galilee. On that occasion the daughter of Herodias came in and danced; and she delighted Herod and his guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want and I will give it to you." And he went so far as to say with many oaths, "I will give you anything you ask, even half my kingdom." She went out to consult her mother, "What shall I ask for?" The mother replied, "The head of John the Baptist." The girl hurried to the king and made her request: "I want you to give me the head of John the Baptist, here and now, on a dish."

The king was very displeased, but he would not refuse in front of his guests because of his oaths. So he sent one of the bodyguards with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded John in prison; then he brought the head on a dish and gave it to the girl. And the girl gave it to her mother. When John's disciples heard of this, they came and took his body and buried it.

Commentary

Herod hears of Jesus' work among the people and is afraid. In the tradition of the prophets, like John whom he beheaded, Jesus' call to the people is accompanied by telling the truth about those in power. John decried Herod's killing of his brother so that he could marry her. Herod knew John was holy, liked listening to him even though he was disturbed whenever he heard him. It is Herodias, his stolen wife who has John beheaded at a dinner party, using her daughter to dance and ask for his head. Power and those who have it can be fascinated by goodness and the truth, equally disturbed by it, but if there is no conversion they will imprison it, butcher it and obscenely parade it for their pleasure. John is murdered on a whim. Jesus will be butchered legally. Truth disturbs power. It should disturb us and call us to holiness and allegiance to God, in resistance to evil in others, governments and nations. Let us pray we are faithful like John and Jesus and the prophets of God.

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JOCO ITALIA Meeting futon sofa bed from Italy	32,900	2,741
SUMMERVILLE SV-725 oval coffee table in cherry finish	12,950	1,079
CANARY CN-323 nest of tables in dark mahogany finish	11,500	958
DT-620 glass top dining table with extension	23,960	1,996
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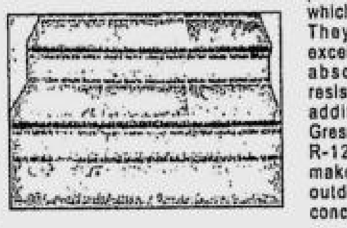

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Gresan extruded tiles are in warm umber terracotta colour, widely used in Mediterranean houses, suitable for various applications including floors, patios, conservatories, atria, terraces, restaurants, paths, pools, walk ways, gardens, staircases, swimming pool deck (which avoids water to be thrown back into the pool), garden & leisure centres, patios, restaurants, kitchen, terraces, car park, water parks, walkways, fast food, etc..

Base floor tiles, steps and swimming pool decks are available on ex-stock.

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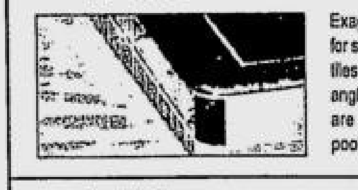

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DEATH PENALTY IN MALAYSIA

23 Pinoys executed in 24 years

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysia has revealed that it executed 358 people, including 23 Filipinos, by hanging in the past 24 years, parliamentary opposition leader Lim Kit Siang said Thursday.

Lim said he had received the statistics from Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is also Minister for Internal Security, in response to a written question submitted in parliament.

Figures for the number of executions in Malaysia have rarely been published, and media attempts to establish the number in recent years were rebuffed.

The death penalty is imposed in Malaysia for a number of offenses from murder and treason to drug trafficking, for which it is mandatory.

Lim, who leads the biggest opposition party in parliament, the Democratic Action Party, said the prisons department had provided him with a statistical breakdown of just 234 of the hangings.

This showed that 50 foreign nationals were hanged, including seven from Thailand, eight from Hong Kong, 23 from the Philippines, four from Singapore, two from Indonesia and one each from Australia, Britain and Pakistan.

Forty-six of them were hanged for drug offenses.

Of 184 Malaysian citizens executed, 48 were from the indigenous Malay majority, 102 were members of the ethnic Chinese minority and 15 were ethnic Indians. Most of the executions—129—were also for drug offenses.

Five of the 234 people hanged were women.

Twelve of the executions were for offenses under the Internal Security Act (ISA), all between 1984 and 1993. Lim told AFP he could not immediately account for the number of hangings for security offenses in such a concentrated period.

The ISA was introduced by former British colonizers to fight a communist insurgency in the 1950s. *AFP*

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BRUNEI 3D/2N	$270	EGYPTIAN TOUR 9D/8N DEP: MAR 21	$1480
		HOLYLAND TOUR 9D/8N DEP: APRIL 18	$1528
SIN+MALAYSIA+ INDONESIA 4D/3N	$283	EUROPE 13D/12N	$1938

ANG BIBLIYA AY TOTOO

Malugod po naming kayong inaanyayahan na dumalo sa pag-aaral ukol sa Bibliya, na pinangungunahan ng mga ebanghelista galing sa Evangelical Layman's Church (ELC). Maraming taon ng nagtuturo ng ebanghelyo ang mga ebanghelistang ito sa iba't-ibang dako ng mundo. Umaasa po kami na kayo rin ay makaunawa sa tunay na kahulugan ng Salita ng Diyos. Ang mga paksang maibabahagi sa pagpupulong ay ang mga sumusunod:

1. Ang langit at impiyerno ba ay talagang umiiral?
2. Ang kasaysayan ng mundo at ang huling araw.
3. Hanapin ang kabuluhan ng inyong buhay at ang walang katapusang pagsisikap.
4. Ang dahilan kung bakit gustuhin mang maniwala ng tao ngunit ayaw.
5. Mga katanungan ukol sa pagiging "born again" sa pamamagitan ng Banal na Espiritu.

Petsa February 7-12, 2005
Oras 6:00 pm
Lugar 2nd floor Taipan Place Bldg.
Emerald Avenue, Pasig City
Tel. no. (02) 7239189

Evangelical Layman's Church

NOTICE TO STOCKHOLDERS OF GLOBE TELECOM, INC.

All shareholders are hereby notified that Globe's Board of Directors approved an offer to purchase one share for every fifteen shares of the outstanding common stock of Globe (par value P50) from all shareholders of record as of 10 February 2005, at a price of P950 per share. The approval allows Globe to purchase up to 9,326,924 shares representing 6.67% of its outstanding common shares. Each shareholder is entitled to tender a proportionate number of shares owned at the 1:15 ratio for purchase by Globe upon and subject to the terms and conditions of the tender offer. Shares purchased on the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) on or after 7 February 2005 will not be eligible for tender to Globe.

The tender offer commences at 9:00 am on 3 February 2005 and ends at 3:00 pm on 2 March 2005.

Shareholders will be sent a copy of the terms and conditions, the tender form, other relevant information and the tender offer report filed by Globe with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC Form 19-1). These are also available from the Depositary or the PSE.

A valid tender of shares shall be made through the delivery of the duly-completed tender form and must be received by the Depositary prior to the end of the tender offer period, along with the following:

If you are a CORPORATION, PARTNERSHIP OR TRUST:

A. Duly endorsed Share Certificates (unless the tender of Shares is through a book-entry transfer, in which case the Depositary must receive a Book-Entry Confirmation with respect to the Shares being tendered on or before the end of the Tender Offer Period);

B. A notarized Secretary's Certificate or its equivalent:
   (i) setting forth resolutions of the tendering Stockholder's Board of Directors or equivalent body authorizing the sale of the Shares and designating the signatories for the purpose; and
   (ii) certifying to the authenticity of the copies of the tendering Stockholder's SEC Certificate of Registration, Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws or other equivalent constitutive documents,

C. Certified true copies of its Articles of Incorporation and By-laws and latest amendments thereof, and

D. A duly accomplished signature card containing the specimen signatures of its authorized signatories validated by the Corporate Secretary and verified by its broker (the name of the broker and the broker's signatory must be specified) or officer of the bank (the name of the bank and the bank's officer must be specified) where it is maintaining an account.

If you are an INDIVIDUAL:

A. Duly endorsed Share Certificates (unless the tender of Shares is through a book-entry transfer, in which case the Depositary must receive a Book-Entry Confirmation with respect to the Shares being tendered on or before the end of the Tender Offer Period);

B. Two valid identification cards with the Stockholder's photo and specimen signature,

C. A duly accomplished signature card containing the specimen signature of the Stockholder verified by his broker (the name of the broker and the broker's signatory must be specified) or an officer of the bank (the name of the bank and the bank's officer must be specified) where he is maintaining an account; and

D. A duly notarized Special Power of Attorney if he is acting through an attorney-in-fact.

Shareholders who decide to tender their shares should complete and execute the tender form and, together with the documentary requirements, deliver the same, either personally or through their PSE member stock brokers, to the Depositary at ATR-Kim Eng Securities, Inc., 17th Floor, Tower One & Exchange Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City, Telephone No. (63-2) 849-8888, (Attention: Nilaida S. Enriquez) while the tender offer remains open.

Subject to appropriate verification and acceptance procedures, as well as the terms and conditions of the tender offer, Globe intends to accept validly tendered shares on 8 March 2005 and will send notices of any unaccepted or partially accepted tenders beginning 9 March 2005. All applications not covered by such notices shall be considered accepted. All accepted shares are expected to be crossed on the PSE on 15 March 2005, subject to the approval of the PSE. Following the cross of the shares, payment is expected to be made on 16 March 2005.

GLOBE TELECOM

TENDER FORM

Application to Tender Shares of Globe Telecom, Inc.

This Application must be prepared in quadruplicate and completed in all parts.		This Tender Form (the "Application") has been prepared for Stockholders of Globe Telecom, Inc. ("Globe" or the "Company") who wish to tender their common shares in the capital stock of the Company with a par value of P50 (the "Shares") to Globe at the rate of 1 Share for every 15 Shares owned. Each Stockholder is advised to read and understand the Letter to Stockholders from the Board of Directors of Globe and the provisions of the terms and conditions relating to this Tender Offer (the "Terms and Conditions") provided with this Tender Form, prior to making an investment decision. Inquiries and requests for additional copies of the Terms and Conditions or the Tender Form may be directed to ATR-Kim Eng Securities, Inc., 17th Floor, Tower One & Exchange Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City, Telephone No. (63-2) 849-8888 (Contact Person: Nilaida S. Enriquez (the "Depositary"). This Application, together with the Required Attachments set forth below, must be received by the Depositary not later than 3:00 p.m. on March 2, 2005, unless extended or terminated earlier at the discretion of Globe. Globe reserves the right to accept or reject this Application in accordance with the Terms and Conditions. Do not complete this application if you are not offering shares for purchase by Globe.	**Application Number**
White	Globe		
Blue	Depository		
Green	Transfer Agent		
Yellow	Tendering Stockholder		

REPRESENTATIONS & WARRANTIES

I/We, in executing this Application, represent and warrant that: (a) all information contained herein and the required attached documents are true and correct and that the signatures thereon are genuine, properly authorized, and obtained without the use of fraud, coercion or any other vice of consent; (b) I/We am/are qualified to receive this Tender Offer in every respect and that I/We are eligible to submit this Application without violation of any applicable laws and regulations in any relevant jurisdiction; (c) the tendered Shares are fully paid and non-assessable, free and clear of any claims, liens, encumbrances, charges or any restrictions apart from those specified in the Articles of Incorporation of the Company and that upon Globe's acceptance and tender of payment for the tendered Shares, in accordance with the Terms and Conditions, Globe shall: (i) obtain full and valid title to such Shares, free from any liens, claims or encumbrances; and (ii) be able to freely and fully exercise all rights and privileges arising from ownership of such Shares, including but not limited to the right to vote and receive dividends; (d) I/We have read and understood the provisions of the Terms and Conditions, and unconditionally accept said Terms and Conditions. I/We understand that no person has been authorized to give any information or make any representation with respect to the Tender Offer other than those representations specified in the Terms and Conditions.

Stockholder's Full Name (in print)		Stockholder's Address	
Stockholder's Signature	Tel. No(s).	T.I.N./Passport No.	Nationality

APPLICATION

I/We apply to tender Shares of Globe Telecom, Inc. under the Terms and Conditions of the Tender Offer, as follows:

Certificate Number(s) or Book Entry Confirmation	Number of Shares* Represented by each Certificate/Book Entry Confirmation	Corresponding Number of Shares* Tendered at the Tender Ratio of 1 Share* for Every 15 Shares* Owned	Price per Share*	Gross Price Shares* Tendered
			P950.00	
TOTAL				

*At a par value of P50.00 per Share

APPLICATION	
We received this Application, with all the Required Attachments below, at ______ a.m./p.m. on ________________, 2005	
Depository	ATR-KIM ENG SECURITIES, INC.
Authorized Signature	

APPLICATION	
This Application is hereby accepted for ________ Shares subject to the terms and conditions set forth herein	
Globe Telecom, Inc.	
Authorized Signature	

Sunni clerics brand Iraq poll illegitimate

BAGHDAD—Influential Sunni Muslim clerics on Wednesday branded Iraq's election as illegitimate, dealing a blow to hopes of reconciliation, as 12 soldiers were killed by rebels in the deadliest attack since the vote.

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The interim premier, a candidate to head the incoming transitional government, met with several party leaders, including members of the Sunni community, which is still reeling from its fall from power.

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The association, which called for a Sunni boycott of the election, said the next government would lack the authority to write a new constitution laying out the framework for a post-Saddam future.

"These elections lack legitimacy because a huge portion of the population boycotted and this tells us the the national assembly and the coming government will not have the legitimacy required for writing the constitution, or concluding security and trade agreements," the committee said.

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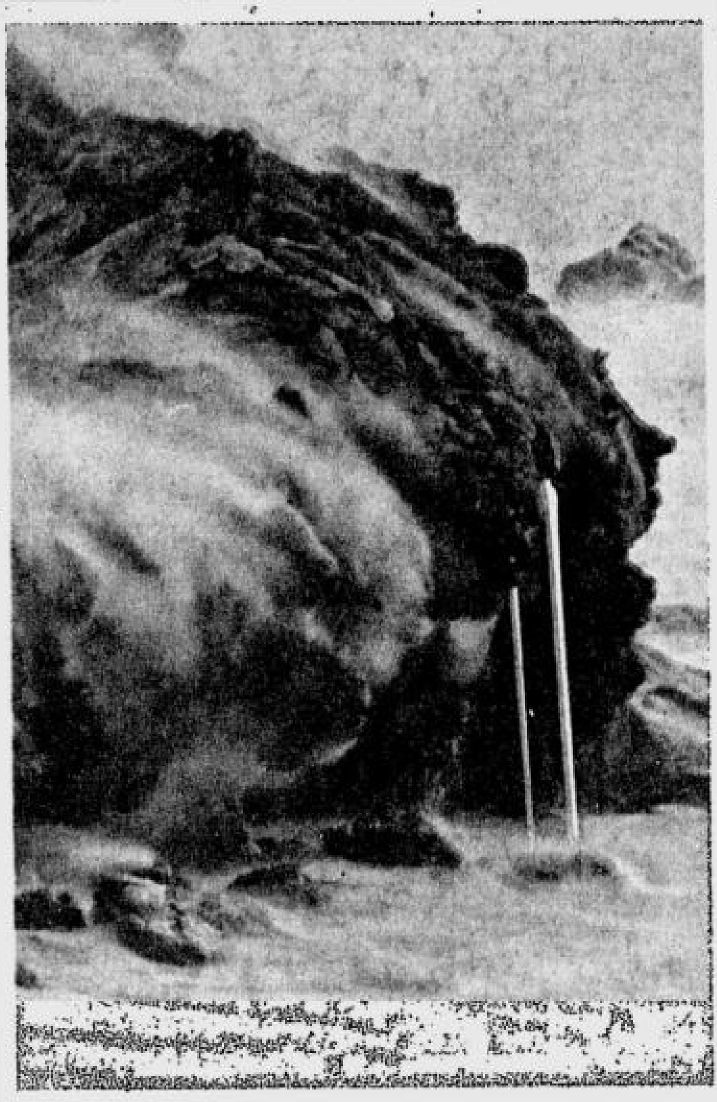

FIRE-BREATHING ISLAND

Lava from Kilauea volcano in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park enters the Pacific Ocean at dawn on Feb. 2, in Volcano, Hawaii. AP

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In India alone, there could be 30 million people displaced by persistent flooding, while a sixth of Bangladesh could be permanently lost to sea level rise and land subsidence, according to the study.

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Global warming will also add significantly to Earth's worrisome water problems.

Already around 1.4 billion people live in water-stressed areas, a term defined as having less than 1,000 cu. m of water per person per year, said Nigel Arnell of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at Britain's University of Southampton. *AFP*

Georgia's prime minister found dead

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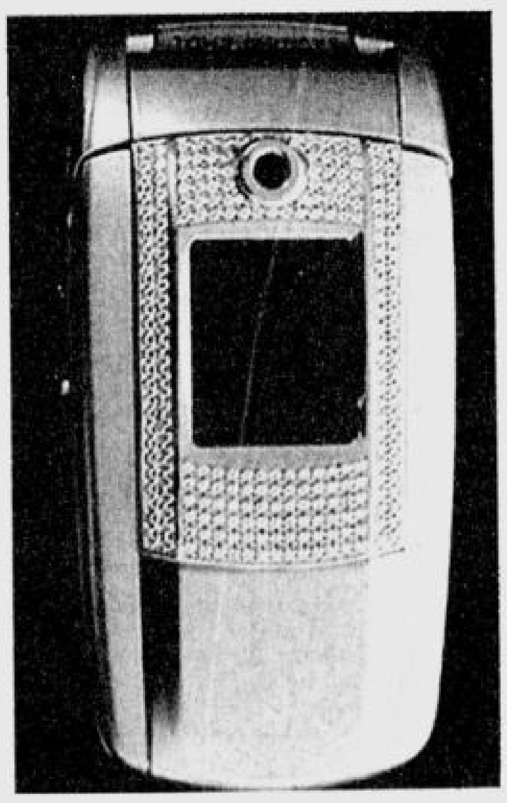

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8:00 PM, Feb. 14, 2005 Philippine Trade Training Center-PTTC (Roxas Blvd., corner Gil Puyat Ave.) • Ticket includes 1 softdrink, free flowing peanuts, theater seating (no tables), and large dance floor. Food sold before and during concert at PTTC Makati Skyline Restaurant's reasonable prices.

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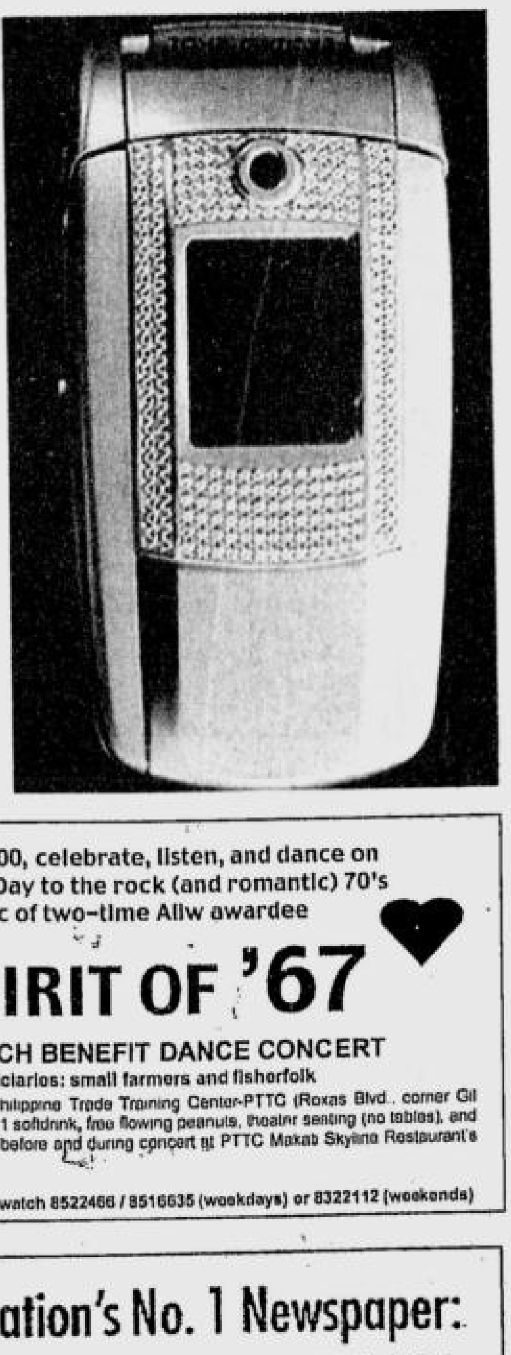

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Court orders DNA test on tsunami baby

KALMUNAI, Sri Lanka—The tsunami survivor known as "Baby 81" and the couple fighting a court battle for custody of him were ordered by a judge to undergo DNA tests next Wednesday, and the results should be known within eight hours.

But the judge on Thursday declined to change the date—more than nine weeks after the tests are conducted—that he would formally hear the results of the tests in court and rule on the couple's claim that they are the child's parents.

Judge M.P. Mohaideen's ruling on Wednesday that he would reconvene the case on April 20 triggered an emotional melee in this eastern Sri Lankan town when the couple and supporters stormed into the hospital where the baby is staying and pleaded for him to be given to them.

The couple, Jenita Jeyarajah and her husband, Murugupillai, were arrested by police along with two supporters after scuffles at the hospital. They appeared before Mohaideen on Thursday to be formally released from custody.

At the hearing, Mohaideen said he had ordered the DNA tests to be done Feb. 9 in the capital, Colombo, more than 200 km west of Kalmunai.

"I have asked this couple to report to the DNA test laboratory at Colombo," he said. "I have been told that the Unicef will take care of the expenses and the transportation of the couple," referring to the UN children's agency.

The baby would also be taken to Colombo—an eight hour drive—under police protection.

Harendra de Silva, head of the government's Child Protection Authority said on Wednesday that DNA testing of the couple could be completed within eight hours.

THE INFANT dubbed "Baby 81" in the children's ward at a Sri Lanka hospital. The child, found alone and caked in mud on the beach after the massive wave receded a month ago, was originally claimed by nine mothers. AP

S.H.M. Manarudeen, a lawyer for the authority, said that once the tests are completed he hoped to file an application for the court to reconvene before April 20 so the case could be settled.

The plight of Baby 81—so named because he was the 81st admission to the hospital on Dec. 26, the day the tsunami struck—has become emblematic of the tsunami's effect on families. More than 30,000 people were killed in Sri Lanka, many of them children.

Nine women claimed in the days after the disaster that Baby 81 was theirs, but only the Jeyarajah's lodged a formal claim. But staff at the Kalmunai Base Hospital objected to the baby being given to the couple without a court order. *AP*

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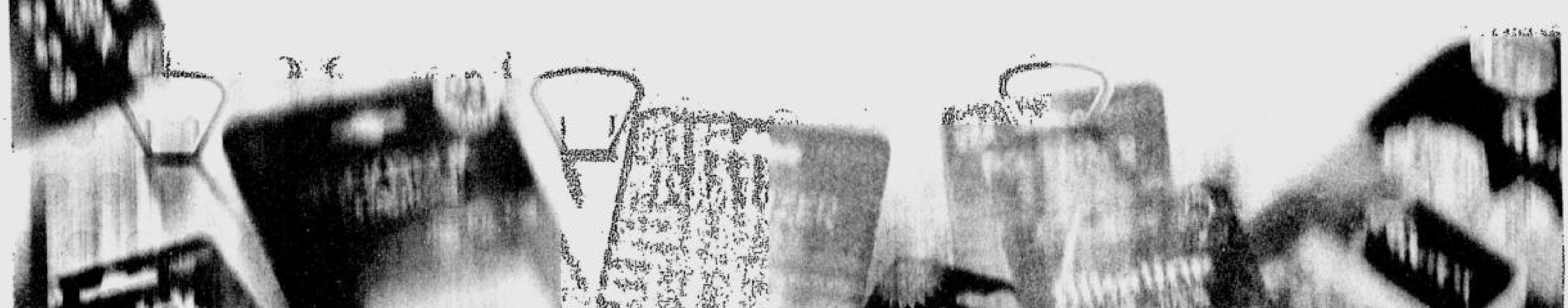

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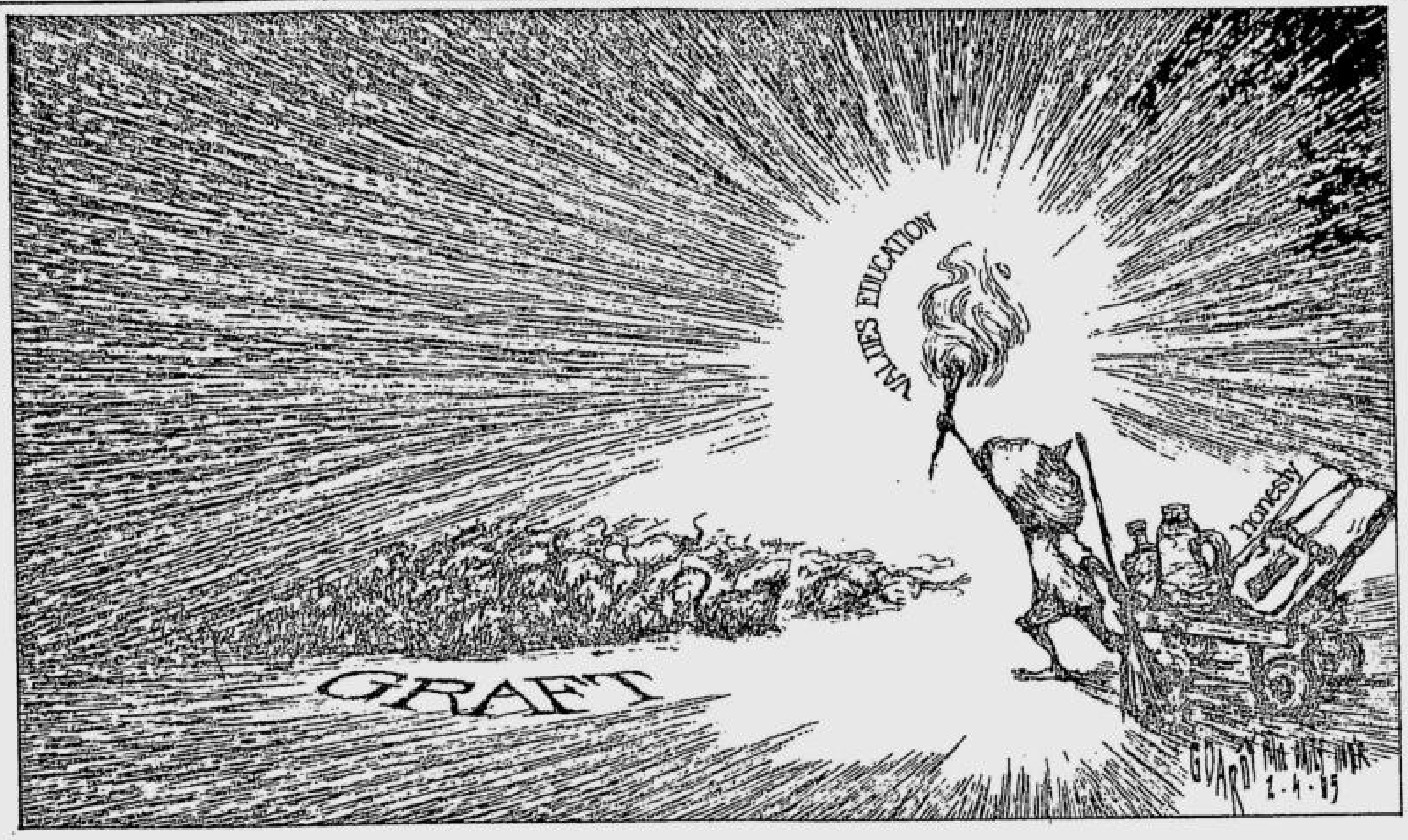

EDITORIALS

Dancing…

THAT the Philippine government continues to flail at the immovable object that is Japan on the matter of its new policy of regulating the entry of Filipino entertainers poignantly illustrates the arid employment landscape—and the knife-edge quality of life—on these fair isles. Per reports, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo was again to fly to Japan yesterday to plead for leniency in the implementation of the new policy, although he was quoted as saying that he was harboring "no false hopes" that he would succeed in his mission.

He could well be dancing in the dark. Romulo and various other Philippine officials, including Representatives Edcel Lagman and Roseller Barinaga of the House committees on overseas workers' affairs and labor and employment, respectively, had made earlier attempts to negotiate Japan's reconsideration of its new policy that was formulated expressly to fight human trafficking. But all their efforts were for naught, and the fortress of Japanese resolve as it applies to this labor issue has remained impregnable.

Unless a miracle occurs and the fortress opens a crack to let slip a glimmer of hope, a Filipino meaning to work in Japan as an entertainer must present proof of at least two years of training in music or dance at a foreign educational institution or two years of experience in another country before he/she can be deemed eligible for a visa. The artist's accreditation card issued by the Philippine government certifying the bearer's skills in the fine art of entertainment will no longer do. And no, not even those who have logged years of working as such in that country are "safe" from the new requirement.

Consider the figures as reported. Japan's new policy will mean a radical cutback in the issuance of entertainer visas from 80,000 to 8,000. The number of Filipino workers in the Land of the Rising Sun is estimated at close to 300,000 (most of whom are said to be employed in bars and nightclubs). Last year alone, the money they sent home amounted to as much as $258.26 million, according to Bangko Sentral records.

This is the problem of an economy that rests on the perilously unsteady foundations of labor export that includes the deployment of desperate men and women to uncertain fates. Imagine the upheaval that will be caused by the Filipino entertainers' sudden unemployment, as well as the dashed hopes of tens of thousands more who are determined to find survival in the neon paradise of the Ginza—and understand why the Arroyo administration is moving heaven and earth to avert the inevitable.

…In the dark

UNDERSTAND also the position of the organization called Talents and Artists Managers Association (Tama), which is seeking President Macapagal-Arroyo's intervention in behalf of some 197,000 Filipino entertainers in clear danger of being repatriated from Japan—and into the arid employment landscape at home. Tama is cognizant of the fact that its "performing artists" easily fall through the cracks and into the dark flesh pots of Japan "no matter how talented or legitimate" they are. But it insists that the "corrupt and abusive labor practices" of local recruitment agencies and Japanese promoters are to blame. And it proposes the creation of a monitoring center, to be run by concerned artists and independent nongovernment organizations, to oversee the Filipino entertainers' daily activities and their general situation.

Tama's Joegrad de la Torre concedes that the Philippine government had as much chance to bend Japan's stance as a snowball in hell. He makes the point—and the problem—crystal-clear when he says: "We should be prepared for these new rules. The Japanese are concerned about human trafficking; our problem is economic."

Mighty Japan hastened to put its new policy in place after the US government cited it as among the countries where human trafficking is rampant. Shuhei Ogawa, spokesperson of the Japanese Embassy in Manila, has gone on record to say that more than 90 percent of the Filipino women working in Japan were forced to become "hostesses" in the nightclubs and bars. He described the situation as "very terrible," and wondered why Philippine authorities would want to "sacrifice those girls" in the course of seeking a moratorium on the new policy.

A pithy, if sanctimonious, question that this "strong republic" seems loath, or quite unable, to answer.

Cancel franchises of striking buses, jeepneys

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

THE PHILIPPINES is the only country in the world where law violators demand the resignation of those who enforce the law. Associations of jeepney and bus drivers, who are the most notorious violators of traffic rules and regulations and are responsible for the anarchy, chaos and traffic congestion in our streets, are demanding the resignation of Chair Bayani Fernando of the Metro Manila Development Authority who has been doing his best to enforce traffic rules and restore order in the streets.

And it is only Fernando, among all the public officials—police officers, mayors, Cabinet members, bureau directors, etc.—who has been able to impose some sort of discipline among drivers, pedestrians and sidewalk vendors even though he is getting little or no help from the police and some mayors. In fact, three or four mayors are openly fighting him for some strange reasons, considering that they are supposed to be on the same side of law and order.

Perhaps, among these reasons is a desire to grandstand and curry favor with the drivers and sidewalk vendors who, after all, are voters, considering that the next local elections is only two years away. Another could be just plain envy. Fernando gets a lot of publicity and favorable press for his efforts. In fact, he is the one Cabinet secretary who has achieved the most to impose discipline in the streets, despite all the obstacles thrown—and still being thrown—his way. Instead of making him resign, we should have more officials like him.

Another reason could be that some local officials and their lieutenants are feeling the pinch of reduced income. For example, it is no secret that the sidewalk vendors of Baclaran were paying *tong* to some relatives and ward leaders of a previous mayor. That is why they have taken over the area around the Baclaran church and could not be removed. Until Fernando came.

Now the same vendors could be pressuring the incumbent mayor to get rid of Fernando so they could return to their hunting grounds. And as we have seen, this mayor is the most vocal against Fernando's "wet flag" and "no contact" policies. If I am not mistaken, he is also among the mayors who threatened to arrest MMDA traffic aides who attempt to enforce these two policies in their jurisdictions.

Why do the drivers and vendors hate Fernando so much? Because he is making them obey the laws and rules. They have been so used to other namby-pamby public officials, who would rather look the other way than make the effort to enforce the law, so that they now feel constricted by a different official who does the duty that he has taken an oath to do. For they do not want to obey the law. They think they're above the law. They want to do their own thing in the streets, and to hell with the law. And because they are voters, some officials would rather coddle them than enforce the law.

The drivers are threatening to punish the riding public by declaring still another strike if Fernando does not resign. Their franchises mandate that they serve the riding public. But they are going to violate their franchises by denying rides to the public because one man is forcing them to obey the law.

This is a golden opportunity for the Department of Transportation, now headed by a law enforcer, a former chief of the Philippine National Police no less, to finally clamp down on anarchy in the streets. The main reason for the traffic congestion is that there are too many vehicles in the streets, including the jeepneys and buses.

The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) went overboard in granting too many franchises to buses and jeepneys. Anybody who could pay the fees and pay a fixer could get a franchise. (And anybody who can bribe a fixer at the Land Transportation Office can get a professional driver's license.) Now we have a surfeit of buses and jeepneys in the streets. The buses crawling on Edsa bumper-to-bumper with only a sprinkling of passengers, even during rush hours, is proof of that. The hordes of jeepneys waiting for long hours at jeepney terminals to get their turn to load passengers is proof of that.

This excess of vehicles fighting for the few passengers is what causes traffic jams. They creep along the streets and dawdle at intersections and beside waiting sheds to wait for passengers. They stop in the middle of the streets to load passengers. The drivers are forced to violate traffic rules—and bribe traffic enforcers—because of the competition. There are too many of them fighting for too few passengers.

The answer, therefore, is to reduce the number of PU vehicles. But the LTFRB cannot cancel franchises without cause. Violating provisions of the franchise, such as refusing to give rides to the public, is one such cause. Therefore, stopping public service without justifiable cause, such as in an unjustified strike, is sufficient reason to cancel franchises. Striking to force a public official to resign because he is enforcing the law is not a justifiable reason to declare a strike. It is coercion.

With fewer PU vehicles in the streets, only enough to service all the passengers, competition will be less and anarchy will stop. Buses can have regular schedules, with scheduled stops like they have in other cities of the world.

The DOTC should welcome the next transport strike so that it can finally solve the traffic problem.

Burying 'people power' at Tienanmen

Passion for Reason

Raul C. Pangalangan

FILIPINOS who consider the people power uprising as the Pinoy contribution to democratic politics tend to forget the massacre during the Beijing spring of 1989. There at Tienanmen Plaza, people power faltered, and the massive pro-democracy protest, which had lasted for seven weeks, was crushed brutally as the Chinese Communist Party unleashed the army against its own people.

Zhao Ziyang, the Communist Party chief then who was ousted for being sympathetic to the student protesters, died last Jan. 17, and until he was cremated 12 days later, a tightlipped Chinese government sought to prevent any public mourning and allowed official recognition of his death only grudgingly after long negotiations with his family.

Zhao Ziyang became party chief in 1987 and called for looser state controls over enterprises, the separation of party from government functions, the independence of the judiciary and civil service. As a local party apparatchik, he first came to public notice for adopting successful agricultural reforms that relied on household production rather than collective farms. Although he was identified with the belief that political and economic reform must go hand in hand, he was by no means a Western-style democrat and still firmly believed in the primacy of the party, allowing democracy only at the lower levels of governance.

His undoing, however, was in opposing the party decision to mobilize the army against the demonstrators, and tearfully appearing at Tienanmen, saying he had come "too late." The next day, martial law was declared, and a few days later, the tanks rolled into Tienanmen, killing countless students and protesters. He was unseated as party chief, became a non-person and was never seen in public again. He spent the next 15 years under house arrest until he died. (Left-wing propagandists are known to airbrush disgraced comrades and make them disappear from official portraits. I have seen a photo of a smiling Lenin with his arm around a suddenly non-existent person. Just imagine what Stalin could have done with Adobe Photoshop?)

The Chinese government imposed a virtual blackout on Zhao's death, lest it stir memories of the bloody assault at Tienanmen Square and trigger new protests. Finally, on Jan. 29, the state held an "invitation-only" funeral (over the family's preference for opening it to the public) at the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in Beijing, the main resting ground for senior party officials.

The funeral was so tightly controlled that "guests could not even bring their own flowers … had to use wreaths brought there by the government … could not even write their own inscriptions on wreaths." The official news agency remained unforgiving. Its obituary said: "During the early period of reform and opening, Comrade Zhao Ziyang … made useful contributions towards the party and the people. [But in] the political turbulence during the Spring and Summer of 1989, Comrade Zhao Ziyang made a grave mistake." State television briefly mentioned the cremation, the very first time that Zhao's death was announced on TV and the first time the ousted party chief's name was spoken on television since 1989.

Why has people power worked in the Philippines, at least twice, and why was it crushed so easily at Tienanmen? I have heard many explanations.

The first is culture: Filipinos do not have it in their hearts to ride a tank straight into a crowd of innocent people. Maybe initially those at Edsa I had thought otherwise and believed that the Marcos military was cold-blooded enough to ram down a gaggle of rosary-praying nuns. Possibly those at Edsa II already trusted their generals to be sufficiently mushy and touchy-feely. So what made it easier to let loose the anti-riot squads against the crowds at Edsa III?

I concede that the Edsa III crowds were more prone to violence than the more genteel at the two earlier people power episodes, but I think the real difference is less about culture and more about class: the two earlier Edsas encompassed the educated middle class in contrast to the unwashed who manned the last.

On that score, Tienanmen is eerily akin to Edsa I and II. The Tienanmen crowd consisted mainly of students—they who had the most to lose from corruption, favoritism and the system of state patronage. Like the protesters at the successful Edsas, the Tienanmen protesters were articulate, motivated by lofty causes and committed to peaceful struggle. Why then was the Tienanmen massacre so easily carried out by its army and subsequently accepted by its people?

The true difference, I venture, is ideology. Tienanmen must be seen as part of a historic bargain between the Chinese Communist Party and its people. Debased by decades of colonial partition, the party unified the land and began to care for its people. When the party elite decided that enough was enough at Tienanmen, they acted on the premise that the party's grip on power could not be compromised. That was a doctrinal line that brooked no dissent, and apparently was widely shared. The armed attack on the protesters was portrayed as a historical necessity. It had to be done, and the people accepted it. Conversely, the best ideological challenge that the Tienanmen protesters offered was symbolized in their papier-mâché Statue of Liberty, a hodge-podge of libertarian slogans unable to present any serious alternative.

We in contrast are not unified by any compelling ideology, and they who would command the troops to attack civilian protesters had better come up with something more convincing to those troops and to the Filipino public than merely saying that the state has the power to defend itself.

Exceptional growth

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

WHAT is most significant about the 6.1 percent growth in the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2004 is not that it surpassed by 1.4 percent the 4.7 percent growth in 2003, but that the economy grew at all despite the combination of adverse political and economic events of the previous years that could have normally stifled growth.

A closer examination of the growth statistics makes last year's economic expansion exceptional and provides the foundation from which to build momentum for further and sustained growth. Consider these elements:

The 6.1 percent growth was even higher than the government's own forecast of between 4.9 percent and 5.8 percent. It was the fastest since the 6.2 percent growth in 1989, marking the biggest expansion in 15 years. It surprised even the government and came as welcome change to the private business sector which had gotten used to gloomy economic performance since the 1997 Asian financial crisis. The economy stalled in the last quarter of 2001, from where it began a sluggish and tortuous climb.

The expansion took place in a turbulent presidential election year that created uncertainty over its outcome, as well as anxiety on the part of the business sector over continuity of economic policies, dampening business expansion plans.

Last year was a year in which politics dominated the concerns of the nation, relegating economic issues to the background and diverting the focus of the administration from economic management. From the start of the presidential campaign in the first quarter of 2004, the business sector was cast adrift in a sea of uncertainty as to whether the Arroyo administration would be returned to power, an uncertainty aggravated by the fact that the leading opposition presidential candidate shunned public debate on economic issues and the opposition itself failed to present an alternative economic program.

The worst period of uncertainty and political stability came in June 2004, when the opposition tried to block the proclamation in Congress of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as the winner, amid allegations that the election was marred by cheating. The proclamation in the last week of June was followed by reports of coup plots challenging the legitimacy of the new government, and these challenges continued to unsettle the business sector.

The effect of political instability is reflected in the figure showing that the GDP growth in the fourth quarter of 2004 (the most politically turbulent period of the year) was 5.4 percent, slower than the annual GDP growth of 6.1 percent

The fourth quarter growth was the lowest of the year, compared with 6.5 percent in the first quarter, 6.6 percent in the second and 6.3 percent in the third. These figures tend to support the argument that political instability can significantly hamper growth.

The fourth-quarter political instability could have had a worse effect on the annual growth rate if it had not been cushioned by other politically related events. Socio-economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said that domestic demand rose by 6.7 percent "on the back of strong and stable consumer spending and investments in fixed capital, especially private construction." The National Economic and Development Authority said that "heightened consumer spending, partly boosted by election-related activities in the first semester of the year, pushed up the growth of PCE (personal consumption expenditure) to 5.8 percent in 2004 from 5.3 percent in 2003." The opposition has charged the administration with heavy spending on infrastructure projects, while some groups have clamored for the impeachment of President Arroyo for allegedly using public funds to bankroll her election campaign and buy electoral support.

The services sector was the best performer, with a 7.3-percent growth last year, up from 5.8 percent in 2003. Services accounted for 47 percent of total GDP. Growth in trade, transportation, communications and storage, and private services, was described as a source of "heightened consumer spending."

The farm sector came in third as a growth engine, with 4.9 percent, behind services and industry, with 5.3 percent. Last year's typhoons and floods left their impact on agriculture whose 2004 growth went down to 3.8 percent. Growth in the fourth quarter of 2004 was 2.3 percent compared with 5.2 percent in 2003.

The above figures send the message that political instability seems to be the most potent element in hampering growth or sustaining economic expansion. Although the 2004 election has been pushed behind, the over-riding agenda this year is economic, focusing on the reduction of the fiscal deficit and the public debt. How the administration succeeds in pushing its tax reform agenda in Congress will determine whether the 2004 GDP growth gains can be consolidated and sustained. Since there's no election this year, public infrastructure spending can no longer be depended upon to help push growth and stimulate consumer spending.

The battle over the deficit with Congress is still being fought in the political arena, where it may be said that the issues are more defined by legislative programs rather than inflammatory campaign rhetoric. In the debate over the tax reform measures, it is now possible to give priority to the economy than to political bickering. The economy is now in the driver's seat. The tax reform measures have a last refocused national attention and energy toward the deficit and away from political point scoring. Regardless of how the members of Congress cross party lines to vote on the tax measures, the tax agenda has galvanized public attention toward confronting the deficit and averting a feared fiscal collapse.

Of ceasefires and civilians

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

"BOMBS, bullets rain down on suspected Abu, JI meet," went the headline of a story on this paper's "Second Front Page" exactly a week ago.

The news report detailed the operations of a military air strike on a group of houses in a "forested marshy area on the outskirts of Datu Piang and Saudi Ampatuan towns," in Maguindanao allegedly to break up a meeting between leaders of the Abu Sayyaf and the Jemaah Islamiyah with members of what the military described as "renegade members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)."

The MILF members, military authorities said, had broken a ceasefire with the government last Jan. 10 when they overran a military outpost, leaving 21 soldiers and rebels dead.

Acting on intelligence reports that senior leaders of the Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah officials, including a certain Dulmatin who is being linked to the Bali bombing, were meeting in the area, Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza, chief of the Southern Command, ordered the air attacks last Jan. 27, employing helicopter gunships and attack planes, backed by artillery.

Last Feb. 1, Col. Jerry Jalandoni of the Army's 604th Infantry Brigade in Maguindanao, interviewed by Cotabato City TV stations, threatened a "major military offensive" against the same forces unless they surrendered by Feb. 12.

Even as the ongoing operations seem to have failed in dislodging the Islamists allegedly entrenched in the Butilen Marsh, the air and ground assaults have displaced residents of eight barangays in Datu Piang, Guindulungan, Talitay and Mamasapano, and wounded civilians "caught in the open during the assault."

* * *

IN THE WAKE of the escalation of military action and the displacement of and harm to civilians in Central Midnanao, Bantay Ceasefire, a coalition of non-government groups monitoring compliance with the ceasefire agreement between the government and the MILF, has called for a pause in the military assaults. "The ongoing military operations in Maguindanao...is threatening the ceasefire between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front," Bantay Ceasefire notes. "But more important, civilians are uninformed and unprotected in the government assaults."

In a statement, the coalition reminds military authorities in the area of the March 13, 2003 memorandum issued by President Macapagal-Arroyo to then Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, where she "enumerated several points that AFP field commanders should consider whenever they make tactical decisions and conduct military operations." The President's order was issued soon after the AFP assault on Buliok which displaced up to 300,000 civilians and resulted in a humanitarian disaster.

"The most relevant points in the memorandum relate to the safety and protection of civilians," points out Bantay Ceasefire. Among these factors to be borne in mind are:

- **The least possible impact of such operations on the larger community of non-combatants, especially on their livelihood and normal conduct of everyday life;**
- **Minimum evacuation from homes and/or areas of food production;**
- **Close coordination with pertinent agencies of government within his or her area of responsibility when socio-economic dislocations are expected or become imminent as a result of such operations.**

"The civilian displacements, property damage and even wounded civilians—documented by a Jan. 28 Bantay Ceasefire fact-finding mission—attest to the fact that the memorandum is not being followed in the Maguindanao attacks. Uninformed civilians were in their homes or farms doing daily tasks when the attacks commenced," the statement continued.

* * *

BANTAY Ceasefire appeals to the Armed Forces "to strictly follow the guidelines (set) by their Commander in Chief meant to (reduce) the impact of military operations on civilians." The group likewise considers the fighting in Maguindanao "exceedingly alarming" and calls on both the AFP and the MILF to "strictly observe and implement the ceasefire mechanisms in settling disputes and complaints for any violation of the ceasefire."

The group reminds the contending forces that both government and MILF peace panels "had already agreed during its Dec. 21, 2004 exploratory meeting in Kuala Lumpur to operationalize an Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG) in the isolation and interdiction of criminal and lawless elements operating in, or near, MILF communities and areas."

If the military is to follow these guidelines, Bantay Ceasefire says, government troops should "refrain from taking unilateral action in pursuing alleged members of terror groups in or near MILF communities and areas to avoid unnecessary armed confrontation with the MILF."

* * *

AT THE SAME time, Bantay Ceasefire calls on the MILF leadership to "immediately investigate and take appropriate disciplinary action" against MILF members who reportedly attacked the military detachment in Maguindanao last Jan. 10, an act that the group also deemed as an "open and clear violation of the ceasefire agreement."

"While soldiers on both sides are trained for war, civilians are not," the statement reminds the leaders on both sides of the conflict. "There are already legal instruments, including United Nations declarations, on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. Let us remember in whose name this war is being waged and protect the civilians."

Having just come from a visit to Maguindanao the other week, I am disheartened by the news of escalated military action in the area which threatens the fragile ceasefire won through painful negotiations. From this distance, all I can do is pray for my friends, and lend whatever space I can to the voices of all those desiring peace, especially for the civilians caught in the crossfire.

Revenues and expenditures of the Aguinaldo gov't

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

SOME readers have sent appreciative e-mail regarding the way this column makes history relevant by connecting it to current events. I wish some of my critics feel the same way, particularly the constipated ones who told me directly that this column could be better used to comment on current social issues. Writing history, according to them, is like aping an ostrich who hides his head in the sand but leaves his body in full view. When I replied that the past can also be a way of addressing the present as well as the uncertain future, they countered that I wrote in a colonial language, English, and that my columns hardly deal with the masses or women, sectors that are marginalized both in the present and in the past.

Perhaps my view of history is skewed because of the primary sources that are often written by men for men. I envy novelists who are not limited by the documents and have license to use the imagination freely to develop a story.

Today being the 106th anniversary of the beginning of the Filipino-American War, I tried to find something new by browsing over the hefty volumes of "The Philippine Insurrection against the United States," these being a mass of documents compiled by J.R.M. Taylor at the turn of the last century. It is the second time that the commemoration is being held in Manila, after the marker and the site were moved from San Juan bridge last year. I have covered and used most of the material on the first shot fired in 1899 that resulted in the ratification of the 1898 Treaty of Paris and eventually the purchase of the Philippines by the United States from Spain—land and people—lock, stock, and barrel for $20 million.

Then serendipity struck again. One of the folded pages opened up to reveal the sources of revenue for the Aguinaldo government in 1898 as reported from the provinces of Pampanga and Pangasinan. This may be stale data now, but in the light of the current debates on VAT the material gains some significance, at least for me.

I didn't really mind the progress of the VAT bill in Congress until they exempted doctors and lawyers. That made me see red, but that wasn't as bad as imposing VAT on books. You would think that books and book paper should be considered basic commodities like rice and exempted, but the desire to bring in more revenue for the government overrides the more important task of forming better citizens through reading. Some people in the finance department and Congress should be forced to view that arresting National Bookstore advertisement on investing in your mind. This shows a man spending money and time in a gym resulting in a buff body but a small mind. Maybe the exemptions should be re-studied and books considered nourishment for the mind as food and drink is for the body.

The long document of 1898 from Pampanga was more detailed than the one from Pangasinan, with two separate columns clearly stating income from taxes and the expenditures of government. The funds came from taxes—direct, indirect, local, and "voluntary" (which in those days could be interpreted as a patriotic duty if voluntary and extortion if one was forced and thus gave reluctantly). General obligations of government covered salaries and supplies for government employees and offices. Obligations also covered prisons (both for criminals and for the Spanish prisoners of war) as well as "church servants," an allocation that today would raise howls about the separation of church and state.

Citizens paid some sort of direct tax, though it is not so clear what this is and how much was required. Perhaps it was a poll tax or *cedula*. What is interesting though is the breakdown for indirect taxes: civil suits, revenue from lands (confiscated) from the religious orders, rental from land and buildings, fines, and taxes on forestry products. Local taxes included carriage licenses, fees on the operation of slaughterhouses and public markets, and inscription of births, deaths, marriage contracts and marriage banns in the civil registry. Fees were collected for the ownership of large cattle, as well as personal and real property. Fishing rights were given out and became a source of revenue, the same as the operation of ferries. One half of a centimo was charged for each pound of meat sold.

Expenses of the government were arranged according to department. Local headquarters meant salaries for personnel, office supplies, books and even "illumination," suggesting that offices were open till dark. Funds were allotted for communications, police, public health (supplies and salaries for *mediquillos*), military officers and public instruction (salaries for teachers of primary instruction of both sexes, supplies and rental of school houses). There seems to have been no budget for intermediate grades and college. Public works got money for construction and repair of buildings but none for roads and bridges. "Church servants" happened to be a bell-ringer and two singers for religious services.

Our budget today is more complicated and bigger than that of 1898, but the effort to balance the books and keep the government afloat remains a problem to be addressed annually.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Pilgrimages of faith and reason

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

BACK in September, I wrote about the controversy revolving around a proposed musallah or Muslim prayer room in the Greenhills Shopping Center, with some Greenhills residents protesting the construction of the prayer room, which they initially claimed was going to be a mosque. Scenarios were painted of Greenhills' property values plummeting as a Muslim "mosque" would draw in crooks and terrorists.

The campaign against the musallah, I felt, was a blatant case of religious bigotry. The shopping center has an estimated 400 Muslim traders, most of whom don't actually live in the area but who, in fulfillment of Muslim religious obligations, need to be able to pray five times a day. For years now, even before the construction of the musallah, the traders had been using a dark alleyway within the shopping center as a makeshift prayer area.

It was good to read that Ortigas and Company, which runs the shopping center, held its ground and pushed through with the construction. It was also appropriate that the new musallah opened on Eid Adha, marking the end of the Haj or annual pilgrimage to Mecca. The symbolism is striking, of pilgrimages revolving around faith and reason.

A triumph of reason

Let's go back to the musallah controversy. It was unfortunate that print and broadcast media seemed to have given more coverage to the opposition. Less visible were the Greenhills residents (I count myself as one of them since I'm frequently at my parents' place, which is in the area) and San Juan officials, including Mayor Joseph Victor Ejercito, who decried the religious intolerance and pushed for the musallah to be built.

The construction and opening of the musallah marks the triumph of reason over ignorance. We've suffered enough from bigoted Christians who propagate negative stereotypes of Islam and Muslims. If the musallah had been denied, that would have been used by the more extreme Islamist groups to recruit new members by pointing to this instance of Christian intolerance as a reason for jihad or holy war.

To their credit, Catholic and Protestant leaders spoke out against the prejudice surrounding the Greenhills controversy. Even Masses at the Catholic chapel in the Greenhills Shopping Center were temporarily suspended at the height of the controversy, as a way of expressing solidarity with the Muslims.

All these developments show that the Christian-Muslim "problem" is surmountable. Reason can prevail here, recognizing that the two religions are very different, and yet can coexist through shared values, especially that of mutual respect.

I always felt uncomfortable seeing the alleyway where the Muslims used to pray—it was dark and dank and dingy, not a pretty sight for Christian passersby. The musallah gives decent space to Muslims and, who knows, might even become a way for Muslims to explain their faith to Christians.

Haj

The new musallah's inauguration coincided with the end of the Haj. That pilgrimage is one of the five pillars of Islam, a profession of faith required of every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to do so. Ideally, a Muslim should be able to make the pilgrimage at least once in a lifetime.

The Haj is shrouded by all kinds of symbolism and meaning. In the first part of the pilgrimage, the umrah or lesser haj, all pilgrims must wear sandals and the ihram, a white unhemmed cloth draped over the body, representing equality of all pilgrims.

Pilgrims have fixed itineraries, moving from one place to another, each with its own meaning-laden rituals. The most publicized is the stoning of the devil in the city of Mina, just outside Mecca. Three pillars, representing Satan, are "stoned" (with pebbles actually). In this year's Haj, there was a modification as pilgrims stoned US President George Bush, seen, presumably, as the devil incarnate.

The Haj is an amazing religious event, in many ways defining the life of a Muslim. The trip, for example, is done only after a Muslim has settled his or her worldly affairs. This means the Haj is not only a pilgrimage toward a place, but itself becomes a goal: stabilizing one's life is a process oriented toward being able to do the Haj eventually. After the stoning of the devil, pilgrims shave their head (women cut off a lock of their hair) as a symbol of rebirth.

Pilgrimages take added significance from the difficulties and sacrifices associated with the journey. Besides the long trip, the stay in Mecca is itself surrounded by risks. In past years, hundreds of people died during the Haj because of fires and stampedes in the pilgrimage sites. There can be no interruptions to a Haj—once started, it must be completed.

This year's Haj took more poignant significance because the deadly tsunami that struck in December 2004 happened just as the Haj started. Many of the pilgrims were from areas in Indonesia and Thailand that were affected by the tsunami; yet, the pilgrims pushed on with their trip to Mecca. It's not surprising that Mecca has become a universal metaphor, used even by Christians, to refer to a difficult but extremely desirable goal or destination.

Two pilgrimages

The parallels between the Greenhills musallah and the Haj are striking. The Greenhills controversy was similar to the hardship one faced going to Mecca. The Haj is a pilgrimage of faith, while the Greenhills imbroglio was a pilgrimage of a different sort, a search for—and a triumph—of reason.

Pilgrimages always involve groups brought together by common aspirations. The Haj has always been an occasion for a display of a most dramatic form of community, that of the ummah, the idea that all Muslims are part of a global community. The struggle to build a musallah in Greenhills showed another side to the notion of community—here of diverse groups seeking each other out, each with their own space but standing side by side.

We should learn from the Greenhills musallah. For example, other shopping centers with large numbers of Muslim merchants should think of providing similar space. I hope, of course, that there will be more interfaith discussions, rather than just prayer spaces and that with time, as Christians and Muslims practice their faith, side by side, we might all find convergence.

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Santiago wrong on Picop

IN A PRIVILEGE speech, Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago included Picop Resources Inc. among the alleged most deadly illegal loggers in the country, accusing it of operating beyond its concession. We categorically deny this accusation.

For truth's sake and clarification, we are inviting the senator to Bislig, where our mill site is located, to see for herself and personally hear the answers to all her questions about Picop.

She may bring with her any NGO or media representatives, even the persons who supplied her with these lies.

Picop is a publicly listed company with thousands of stockholders and considers itself a manufacturer of pulp and paper with plantations and a forest as its source of raw materials. Picop is not a logging company.

The Picop areas are under tremendous pressures from log poachers, destitute migrants (*kaingeros*), armed antigovernment groups and even misguided government agencies and elements.

But we in Picop, its workers, staff, managers and stockholders are proud to say that our forest operation is an open book and the Picop area is probably the largest remaining contiguous intact forest in the country. After more than 50 years of providing employment to thousands of Filipinos and billions in revenues to the local and national government, Picop has kept its forest concession sustainable.

Senator Santiago mentioned personalities allegedly operating at the fringes of the Picop area. Why they are able to operate and secure raw materials for their operating plants without clear forest tenurial instruments should be the subject of her inquiries. It is extremely unfair for the senator to lump Picop with them—a case of the victim being accused with the perpetrators.

When Picop's contract with the government, signed in 1968 and 1969, was impugned by former Environment Secretary Heherson Alvarez, Picop was favored with decisions from the Quezon City Regional Trial Court and Court of Appeals. There has been no desire or need on the part of the whole Picop organization to source its raw materials illegally or out of regulations.

From 1990 alone, Picop has planted over 17 million trees. Section 34, of PD 1559 provides that:

"Trees and other products raised within the industrial tree plantation, tree farm or agro-forestry farm belong to the lessee who shall have the right to sell, contract, convey, or dispose of said planted trees and other products in any manner he sees fit, in accordance with existing laws, rules and regulations."

We request Senator Santiago—if she's not able to go to Bislig—to issue a statement in public to clarify what she said about Picop.

—T.G. BERNARDINO,
president, PICOP Resources Inc.,
Tabon, Bislig City, 8311 Surigao del Sur

A grand salute to the INC chief

IN MY personal opinion, everybody can hold up Ka Eraño Manalo as an idol. Why?

According to a reliable source, many of the followers of the powerful leader of the Iglesia ni Cristo want to get a job in the government. And a high ranking government official is said to have recently offered to appoint one of his followers the post of Customs commissioner.

But the revered Manalo has a message: getting a government job should be based on merit rather than connections.

We, in the Association of Newsboys & Vendors of Cainta, Marikina, Antipolo Association Inc., are very much impressed by this. Ka Eraño Manalo is one in a million. In behalf of our association, I salute him.

—EULOGIO F. ALFONSO,
president and chair,
Association of Newsboys & Vendors
of Cainta, Marikina,
Antipolo Association Inc.

On VAT hike

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

I AGREE with the opposition that the government should pursue collection of the uncollected VAT; or, at least, the government should give a detailed accounting or explanation as to why the projected collection from the VAT has not been realized. If collectors are inefficient, fire them. Don't reward them!

In the meantime, if the country really needs the money, the two-percentage-point VAT increase should be levied. Anyway, if efficient collection shows that the increase is not needed, then the government can revert to the old rate.

I believe that if those in the opposition were in the administration, they would be the ones pushing for this tax.

Perhaps, the government and those who are pro-VAT should list down what the poor who belong to D and E classes—include the C class—buy, and then come up with an estimate as to how much VAT goes into their purchases within a given period. Then match that with the effect the VAT collection will have on their everyday life. I am sure that the "downpayment" individually made by the poor will be pretty negligible as against the benefits they will receive as a result of improved government finances. Explaining to the people directly should refute the claims of those who have ulterior motives for opposing the VAT increase.—**Jose Orozco, Calamba (Laguna), via e-mail**

* * *

I don't understand our lawmakers: Why would they want to increase the value-added tax? More poor consumers will be affected by this. Is there no other way to generate revenue for the government—one that will not affect poor people? Instead of making money from our poor countrymen, why don't we tax the big corporations on their gross incomes. This way, we can prevent tax evasion.—**Raomel San Jose, Via S. Melchiade Papa 11, Int. 14, Italy, via e-mail**

* * *

I am disgusted by the way our congressmen passed the House bill increasing the VAT from 10 to 12 percent. For one thing, I am not sure now if our representatives in Congress are doing their job of representing us, their constituents.

However, I salute those congressmen who voted against the bill because they voted according to their conscience and moral aspirations.

Any increase in the VAT will only financially overburden our people who are faithfully paying the present 10-percent VAT; while those who are not paying VAT or under-declaring their sales will be raking it in at the expense of the people.

Because of this increase, I am afraid small businessmen will be forced to close shop. If this happens, the ranks of our unemployed will balloon overnight. And you and I know what a destitute man is capable of doing. Multiply this a million times and we are staring disaster in the face.

I suggest the government should instead maintain the present 10-percent VAT and maximize collection from all business establishments, without fear or favor. If the government, particularly the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs, succeed in this collection campaign, we will not only have enough money for the delivery of basic social services—corruption in government will eventually be defeated. Let us act now before it is too late.—**Mon Encarnacion, Project 4, Quezon City**

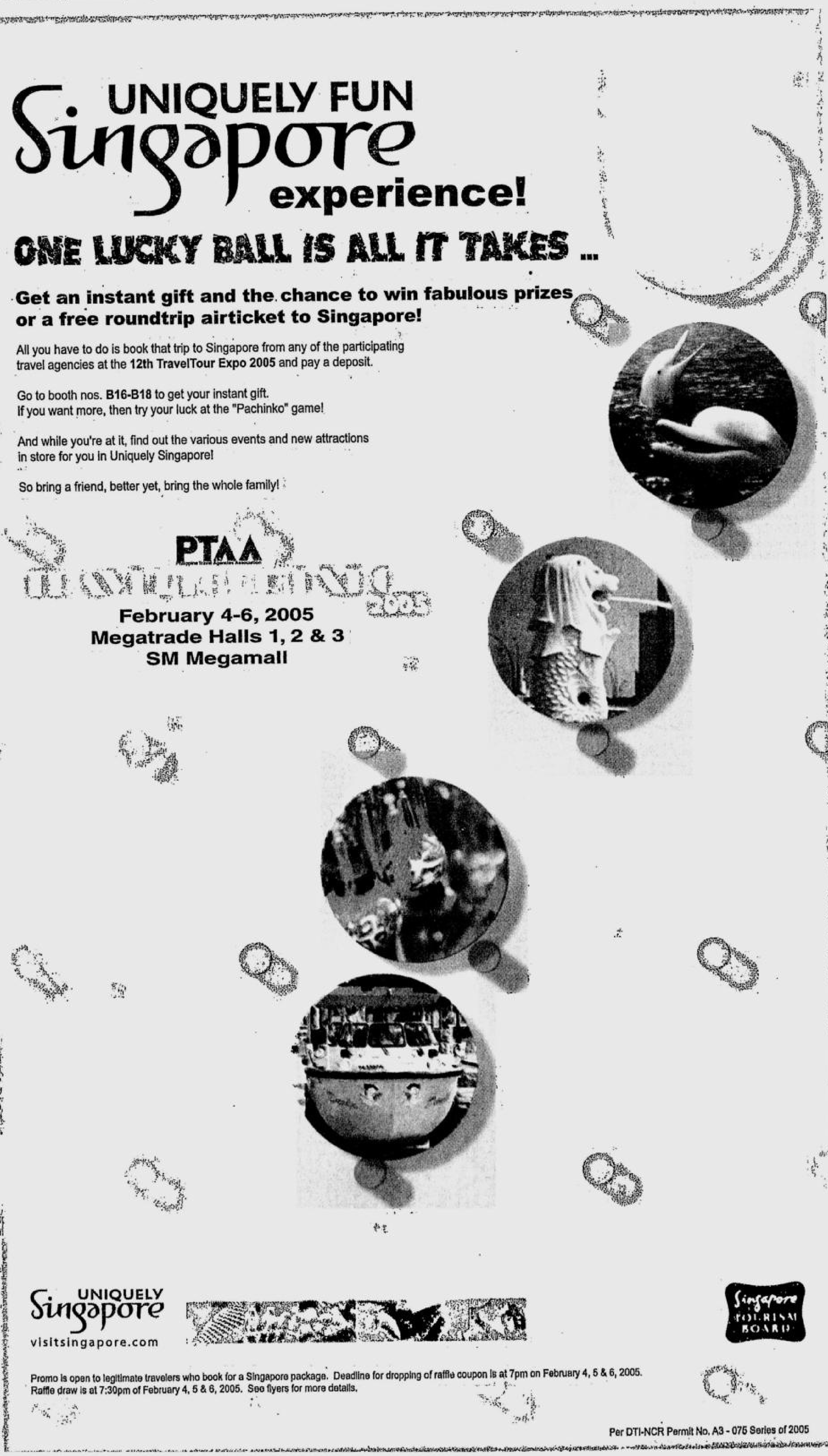
* * *

Even if the VAT increase succeeds in reducing our budget deficit, in the long run it is anti-progress. The problem is tax evaders and corruption. Putting the burden on the innocent sector—the poor and middle class—will only take away our attention from tax evaders and corrupt officials.—**Brian Brotarlo, Iloilo City**

* * *

People share in the "cost of government" with the taxes they pay. They pay taxes when they produce. And again, they pay taxes when they consume. With the VAT, the government is telling its people: "Cut down on consumption." With the e-VAT, government is again telling its people: "Cut down on consumption—even more." This applies to all—the rich, the poor, and the middle class. This is also true with the "productive" and the "un-productive."

When the great majority of our people are heavily burdened by the high "cost of living," who must pay the "cost of government"? The poor (who have little) look up to the rich (who have plenty) for justice, for charity—and for love of country. But, the rich are well represented in Congress—and hardly show any love of country. Sadly, the middle class (whose salary income is automatically taxed) unfairly carries the heavy cost-of-government.—**Ernesto C del Castillo, # 3, Venus St., Meteor Homes Subd., Bgy. Fortune, Marikina City**



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Scion, bar owner nabbed for kidnap

BAGUIO CITY—Police here on Wednesday arrested seven men, among them the owner of a popular country-western music bar here and a son of a local hotelier, who were implicated in the kidnapping of a hotel manager.

Edelberto Artuz, 24, manager of Star Mountain Hotel in Quezon Hill here, was abducted last week and later released in Barangay Longlong in La Trinidad, Benguet, near the border of the city.

Artuz's family reportedly paid P1.8 million from the original ransom demand of P10 million.

A statement from the Cordillera police office identified the arrested suspects as Dennis Ong Sy, 28, son of the owner of Concorde Hotel; Patrick Balangitan, 32, owner of Batawa Music Bar; Christopher Yamson, 30; Edward Mangawili, 29; Patricio Benos, 41; Augusto Mariano, 30; and Robin Lualo, 27.

Senior Supt. Isagani Nerez, Baguio police director, said Artuz was abducted while walking along Domincian Road on Jan. 28.

Nerez said Artuz was forced into a Mitsubishi L-300 van and was taken to Mt. Province.

The kidnappers, according to Nerez, demanded P10 million as ransom, with Sy reportedly acting as intermediary. Sy and Artuz were childhood friends, according to the police.

Nerez said the demand was eventually lowered to P1.8 million, to which the Artuz family agreed.

The Cordillera police said the payment was made on Feb. 2, at about 4 a.m., inside the Star Mountain Hotel. Artuz was released in Barangay Longlong 30 minutes after the payoff.

The police tailed the suspects and arrested them in various areas of the city at about 5 a.m. Wednesday.

The arresting team was composed of personnel from the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force, the Baguio police, Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (Pacer) team, Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, intelligence and investigation office of the Cordillera police, the Benguet police office and the Bauko (Mt. Province) police office.

Recovered from the suspects were the P1.8 million ransom money, a .45 cal. pistol, bullets, cellular phones and three vehicles (Toyota Revo, Mitsubishi Pajero and Mitsubishi L-300). *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

₱10M in seized logs disappear from DENR

BUTUAN CITY—An estimated P10 million worth of illegally cut logs seized two weeks ago along the Agusan River are missing from the repository compound of the Natural Resources Development Corp. (NRDC), according to a tribal group turned environmental watchdog.

Victoriano Vidal, chief executive officer of the Tribal Coalition in Mindanao (Tricom), said the missing logs, numbering about 2,500, were part of the 7,000 pieces of assorted Lauan and Narra species his group helped seize in Barangay Bit-os here on Jan. 20.

Vidal said his group discovered the anomaly a few days ago after conducting an independent inventory at the riverside compound of the NRDC in Magallanes, Agusan del Norte.

"It's very frustrating, the government's anti-illegal campaign is useless because corruption in the DENR remains prevalent," Vidal said.

The NRDC is an agency attached to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) mainly tasked with marketing and disposing of seized illegal logs.

Last year, heavily armed men stormed the NRDC Compound and "rescued" millions of pesos worth of seized illegal logs.

The NRDC and DENR tried in vain to cover up the theft but failed after several witnesses surfaced.

Vidal said he and the town officials of Magallanes demanded an explanation from ranking environmental officials but were ignored.

He challenged Environment Secretary Michael Defensor to immediately identify his erring men and charge them in court.

But Benjamin Tumaliaun, regional environment director, said Vidal's allegation was untrue.

Tumaliaun called the tribal leader an "extortionist." He did not elaborate.

Vidal shot back at Tumaliaun, tagging him as the "godfather" of illegal logging operations in the region.

He said his group has evidence linking Tumaliaun to alleged powerful men behind the illegal logging trade in the region. *Franklin Caliguid, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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Vice mayor's slay worries Laoag execs

LAOAG CITY—Officials in this city described the murder of Vice Mayor Jimmy Chua on Wednesday as an indication of the growing lawlessness and sloppy police work in Ilocos Norte.

In a strongly worded draft resolution, Laoag councilors took to task local officials for their failure to ensure the capital city's and the province's peace and order. They said Chua's murder was a "direct threat" to the legislative body and to every citizen.

Two motorcycle-riding men shot and killed Chua early Wednesday morning outside a bar where he and other Laoag officials were eating and drinking.

Chua died from a bullet wound in the right temple. Police did not recover a slug from the crime scene.

At least 10 councilors showed up in Wednesday's regular session that Chua would have presided.

Councilor Marlon Manuel, who took the first slot in the councilors' race last May, took over Chua's seat and started presiding over Wednesday's session.

Tourism officials, however, remained unfazed with the killing that occurred as Laoag kicked off its month-long city fiesta.

"Some tourists may shy away from the festivities but we are hopeful that the presence of policemen around festivity areas will provide comfort and security to our guests," Milagros Gonzales, provincial manager of the Department of Tourism, said. *Cristina Arzadon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Celebrate Chinese New Year at Mandarin Oriental.

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We indubitably believe that CAP, an institution wholly-owned by Filipino businessmen, is not in the brink of bankruptcy or in a state of insolvency.

We further believe that the controversy and the issues involved as being pictured to our countrymen does not evoke the gospel truth but rather there are "unseen hands" that manipulates the situation to derive undue advantage at the expense of CAP.

We finally believe that CAP as an institution had long been providing service to the Filipino People and deserves our support and should not be further oppressed by any individual who claims and professes his love for our country.

We fervently appeal to our government, our friends in the media and most of all, to you our countrymen. Sobriety is called for in this situation. Let due process take its course without any undue influence from any individual with selfish pursuits.

The eventual demise of CAP is a threat to the continuing effort to attain economic independence and stability of our enterprises. If this can be done to an institution like CAP, how much more to the ordinary enterprises who are working so hard to contribute to the growth of the country.

The eventual growth of our economy should be founded on the stability of our own enterprises.

Stop the undue interference against Filipino Businesses.

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Puerto Galera posts hike in tourist arrivals

PUERTO GALERA, Oriental Mindoro—There was an increase in the number of tourists visiting this town last year, according to municipal tourism officer Aileen Bareng.

More than 100 tourism-related establishments registered 947,738 foreign and local tourist arrivals from January to November last year, said Bareng. There was an increase of 356,100 visitors, she said.

A travel agency manager said the figure could go up as some resorts might not have reported all their guests for "tax purposes."

Adoracion Sison, owner of the Tamaraw Beach Resort in Barangay Aninuan, said she was happy with the number of guests she had been accommodating.

Fiona Funke of Germany and David Schetky of the United States, said they found Aninuan more private, quiet and wholesome compared to Sabang and White Beach.

A group of stewardesses from Kuala Lumpur has been coming in batches.

Construction projects are going on for a busier season from April to mid-June, said Sison.

Her 15 cottages were fully packed from December to January.

"Our advantage is, at P365, you're already here. It's more accessible and affordable," said Bareng, saying Puerto Galera's beauty, its white beaches, dive sites, waterfalls and indigenous peoples are its assets.

Mayor Aristeo Atienza said the national government should help more in the promotion of Puerto Galera.

Tourism in Puerto Galera boomed in the late 1970s.

Residents said a certain Montiel, a retired teacher, started a homestay program for a foreign couple.

Then it spread by word of mouth. *Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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Another task force gov's answer to quarry mess

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Pampanga Gov. Mark Lapid announced a plan to create a new task force that would tap the participation of the private sector in monitoring quarry operations in the province.

Aside from an executive order that he would issue as basis for the creation of the new monitoring body, Lapid said another order was being prepared allowing the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to set up watch points to check the collection of sand fees.

The governor announced his so-called reforms in a two-page statement issued on Wednesday. He declined an interview to explain the plans.

Tax collection arm

The announcement came nearly three weeks after retired Lt. Gen. Victor Corpus, chair of the state-owned Natural Resources Development Corp., presented a business proposal making his agency the provincial capitol's quarry tax collection arm.

Through the plan, the NRDC would also raise money for the national government's reforestation program, Corpus said. The plan again stirred the controversy that had hounded the governor's father, now Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid, since 1998.

Governor Lapid said he would like the task force to be comprised this time of "highly respectable civic, religious and nongovernment organizations' representatives."

Senator Lapid formed the first task force on July 23, 1996, through Executive Order No. 15. Then as now, only capitol officials were named members of that body.

Vice Gov. Joseller Guiao, who revealed the alleged anomalies in the quarry tax collection and accused the Lapids of plunder due to a P337.4 million in income discrepancy, said he still expected genuine reforms.

Reforms

"Monitoring would not be enough. It is the collection system that has to be changed, made transparent and closely watched. And then, who will account for the income lost? What about corruption?" he asked.

Levy Laus, president of the Pampanga Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said he suggested the creation of a new task force.

"It will not only help monitor but improve effective and efficient collection of quarry fees... (and increase the collections) progressively," Laus told the INQUIRER.

Most businessmen in the province perceived the collection system as tainted with corruption, a survey showed.

Governor Lapid set a minimum target of P30 million this year, lower than the NRDC's target of P36 million.

In the same statement, Provincial Administrator Fidel Arcenas said Lapid's plans were being pursued before Corpus gave his proposal on Jan. 17 while the governor was in the United States.

Arcenas called Lapid's plan of involving the private sector in the task force as a "best option."

Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

IMPORTANT ADVISORY FOR WEST ZONE CUSTOMERS
February 4, 2005

Since the start of January 2005, the raw water supply from Angat Dam to Maynilad Water Services Inc. was reduced further, due to the blockage by typhoon debris of the Umiray Tunnel, which flows into Angat Dam and accounts for 20% of domestic water supply.

The reduction of the raw water supply, in turn, has diminished the output of Maynilad's La Mesa Treatment Plants. From an average output of 2265 million liters a day (MLD), the plants are now able to produce only 2000 MLD, a reduction of 265 MLD.

As a consequence, the water supply to elevated portions of the West Zone concession---including Toro Hills in Project 8, San Francisco Del Monte, and Commonwealth District in Quezon City; Sta. Quiteria, Baesa, Bagong Barrio, University Hills, Heroes del 96 and portions of East Grace Park, Caloocan; Gen. T. De Leon, Upper Marulas, Tullahan, and Arkong Bato, Valenzuela City; Bacood, Sta. Mesa, Manila; San Antonio Valleys 10 and 11, Paranaque City; Lozada St., St. Joseph Subdivision, Martinville, Pulang Lupa Dos, Dona Macaria, Pamplona, Manuyo Dos, Las Pinas; Palico, Imus;---have been affected.

To counter the effects of the reduced raw water supply from Angat Dam, Maynilad Water has intensified leak repairs, disconnection of illegal connections and replacement of old pipes and facilities, and is adjusting valves to maximize the distribution of water to affected areas. Mobile tankers are also being dispatched to attend to the needs of affected residents.

These are apart from the on-going water recovery projects aimed at delivering the recovered water to underserved or unserved areas. These projects include the just-finished Tondo Foreshore F-1 Zone Pilot Project and the on-going Dagat-Dagatan Pilot Project covering Caloocan City, Malabon and Navotas.

In the meantime that the Umiray Tunnel is being repaired and the raw water supply is reduced, we advise our customers to conserve water.

Please accept our apology for this unforeseen event which is beyond our control.

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Ecija city beats record in longest sausage line

By Anselmo Roque
PDI Central Luzon Desk

A SEGMENT of the record-beating longganiza line put out by Cabanatuan City businessmen and residents.

ANSELMO ROQUE/PDI CENTRAL LUZON DESK

CABANATUAN CITY—Longest and sold out. These were the records set Wednesday by this city for the longest longganiza (native sausage) line in the country.

Bobby Pararuan, chair of the longganiza festival here, said the longganiza line established here reached 3,327 meters long. It exceeded the 3,000 meters the festival set to beat the Laoag City record of 2.213 km.

The longganiza line covered all four sides of the two-lane street in the business section of this city. The products were arranged in GI wire fastened in a tripod structure made of bamboo. Pararuan said 2,560 kilograms of meat were used for the production of the sausage done by 10 meat vendors in the two public markets here.

Total production cost, which included condiments, reached P371,000 which was shouldered by the meat vendors. They were all sold out at the end of the three-and-one-half hours display which started at 6 a.m. The sausages were sold at P1.50 a kilo.

Gov. Tomas Joson III, who was invited to view the display, said the next target of this city is to display well packaged longganiza.

Mayor Jay Vergara told the INQUIRER that his wife, Ria, a businesswoman, is putting up P5 million to set up a facility here for the packaging, storage and other activities for longganiza products.

Aside from the building, the facility will have a blast freezer and vacuum sealer. This will ensure that the sausages can be delivered elsewhere in the country and even abroad, Vergara said.

He said several businessmen have been sending their men just to buy hundreds of kilos of longganiza. "Our native sausage is really good tasting," he said.

Aside from native sausage, the facility will also produce tocino and other meat products.

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JARO

1st gov of Biliran province dies; 70

WAYNE McFarlan Jaro, the first governor of Biliran when the province was separated from Leyte, died last Jan. 30. He was 70 years old.

He is survived by wife Amelia, children and spouses Marili and Mark Shoop, Ricky and Gina, Wayne Edward, Jake and Jing Wayne Matthew, John and Maan, Nonette and Jerome Iñigo, Chris and Liza and Stella and Alaminos Mayor Hernani Braganza.

His remains lie at the Resurrection Chapel at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish at the Claret Church on Mahinhin and Mayumi streets in Diliman, Quezon City.

He would be cremated today.

His remains would be buried in Naval, Biliran. Interment details would be announced later, the family said.

German in Boracay slayings says he's not hiding, fleeing

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—"I'm not hiding and I'm not running way."

This was the reaction of the German mechanic charged with last year's killings of three foreigners and one Filipino on Boracay Island in Aklan on reports that police are hunting him to serve a warrant for his arrest.

Uwe Friesl, who was reached by the INQUIRER through his mobile phone on Wednesday, said he is still in the country and will "come out" if necessary.

He denied that he left Boracay shortly before he was indicted on Jan. 5 with three counts of murder. "I left the island eight months ago to confer with my lawyer on my case," he explained.

Friesl, 37, said he is still in the country but will not return to Boracay at least until the case is resolved.

"I feel uncomfortable there because there has been a lot of talk about my case and people look at me as if I'm a criminal," he said.

Disappointment

He said he was also "very disappointed" in being dragged into the case. "I helped the police in the investigation and provided them with all the information I knew and they accused me of murdering my friend Anton (Forstenhausler)."

The Aklan Provincial Prosecutor's Office charged Friesl with the May 1 murders of Forstenhausler, a German, Swiss-born vineyard owner Manfred Schoeni, Hong Kong-based architect John James Cowperthwaite and Forstenhausler's Filipino maid Erma Sarmiento.

The victims' bodies were found with multiple stab wounds in Forstenhausler's three-story mansion on Mt. Luho at Sitio Bulabog in Barangay Balabag on the island-resort.

Friesl said he would wait for the resolution of the motion for reconsideration filed by his lawyer Jaime Ma. Flores II questioning his indictment.

Flores filed the 14-page motion on Wednesday at the Aklan Provincial Prosecutor's Office in the capital town of Kalibo.

In his motion, Flores refuted the testimony of a prosecution witness who allegedly saw Forstenhausler scolding Friesl in Boracay on April 30, 2004, a day before the killings were believed to have happened.

Testimony

He presented a joint-affidavit of couple Erich and Rosemarie Eschberger who said they were with Friesl on board the M/V Virgin Mary from Manila to Boracay from the afternoon of April 30 until 9 a.m. the next day.

The couple also said they had dinner with Friesl in Boracay on May 1.

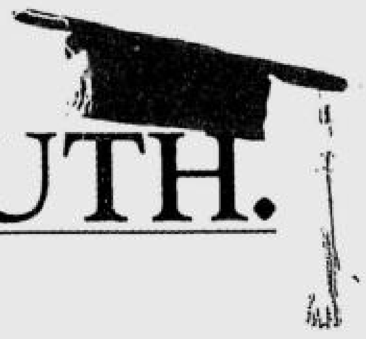
Flores also reiterated in his motion Friesl's explanation on why a set of footprints found in a lavatory matched those of Friesl's.

The resolution indicting Friesl was mainly based on the footprint specimens taken near the lavatory on the second floor of the mansion where the bodies of the three foreigners were found.

Flores said it was the police who requested Friesl to go into the house and the bathroom to help identify the bodies.

The lawyer asked for the dismissal of the complaint against his client and for a reinvestigation of the case.

THE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH.



To Our Valued Planholders and Stakeholders :

So much negative media has been written and broadcast about College Assurance Plan (CAP). **Some misguided and unscrupulous elements have been quick to claim CAP is insolvent and should be closed. Many of you have been grossly misled by this deadly, unrelenting and well-orchestrated attack on CAP.**

College Assurance Plan (CAP) made college education affordable for thousands of Filipinos. You trusted it before, you can still trust it today.

CAP sent its first scholar to college in 1985. Today, **84,490** scholars have graduated from college, **90,230** are presently enrolled in various colleges and universities and a total of **174,720** planholders are being served by CAP.

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If so, you, our valued clients would perhaps ask... what happened? For a fair, honest and complete picture, here's what really happened...

Every year, an actuary does valuation work to predict a reserve liability at some point in time in the future when the pre-need plans sold will mature. It can go as far as 30 years in the future depending on the age of the beneficiary. Benefit payments are anticipated long before they occur, taking into account the inflation rate at the time the plan was purchased up to its maturity, no matter the cost.

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Based on SEC rules, the **Actuarial Reserve Liability (ARL) or prediction of future liability is made to appear as an actual liability in CAP's financial** statements during the year 2003.

How can a prediction of future or contingent liability be declared as actual liability when in truth, no such actual liability occurred?

When this happened, some bureaucrats were overly eager to declare CAP insolvent. The inclusion of the questionable ARL, based on empirical data, has been 42% off in the last 3 years and makes the whole valuation process erroneous.

Is it true what the Media and SEC say about CAP being insolvent?

NO! CAP is not insolvent. In fact, CAP had retained earnings of 7.0 Billion Pesos in 2003 and not a loss as bruited about by some sectors. If CAP is insolvent on paper, this is only because of :

1. Inclusion of ARL on the financial statements.
2. The questionable ARL which was made to appear by SEC as an actual liability has been, by empirical data, off by about 42% in the last 3 years.

If so, does CAP have the means to actually pay its planholders?

Yes. In spite of the difficulties.

CAP assures its valued planholders that it has the necessary assets and trust fund that can meet its long-term obligations of paying CAP scholars' tuition fees. These assets, together with all other pertinent documents, were already submitted to the SEC as part of the justification for the issuance of a new permit to sell.

Here's what CAP has already done to remedy the situation : **in January 24, 2005, CAP increased its capitalization from 300 Million Pesos to 8.0 Billion Pesos.** If it was able to pay for over 84,490 in scholars' benefits with a 300 Million capitalization, just think of what 8.0 Billion in capitalization can achieve.

Last January 24, 2005, CAP inked a $300 Million loan with First American Investment and Philippine Veterans Bank. The proceeds of this loan will go to paying planholder benefits.

In a recent newspaper article, SEC demanded to see the color of our money. Obviously, financial advisers will tell you that it's a chicken-or-egg situation where the influx of new capital won't happen if the SEC won't approve the memo of agreement and loan agreement that we presented as a workable solution.

The CAP trust fund portfolio as of December 31, 2004 is as follows :

Stocks (with BOC, ABC and MBTC)	P2,251,529,179.00
Real Estate (with BOC, ABC and PVB)	2,741,109,370.00
Fixed Income (with ABC, MBTC, EBC, PVB and EWB)	409,562,404.00
MRT Bonds (with BOC, EWB and PVB)	3,322,456,171.00
TOTAL	P8,724,657,124.00

It's true that CAP's cash flow has been somewhat affected by all the negative publicity as well as the absence of a Dealer's License and/or permit to sell which has caused collections to fall from 4.5 Million Pesos daily to less than 1.0 Million. This liquidity problem is temporary, and if need be, may be readily addressed by the sale of some of its MRT bonds. But because of this present environment where "vulture funds" are lying in wait, selling the bonds would be at a loss. These MRT bonds however, are backed up by the sovereign guarantee of the Republic of the Philippines and have a present day value of 3.0 Billion Pesos and a face value on maturity of 10.0 Billion Pesos.

CAP reassures its planholders it will not renege on its obligations.

First of all, CAP continues to meet its obligations and commitments to its planholders. In fact, during the First Semester of School Year 2004-2005, CAP fully paid 1.2 Billion Pesos in benefits. Of the 1.2 Billion Pesos in benefits due in the second semester, 425 Million Pesos were already settled.

If a school will not accept a CAP check as tuition fee payment, CAP can and will reissue the check in the planholder's or beneficiary's name.

We need you, our valued planholder, to understand this temporary problem and stand by us during these trying times as we remedy the situation. You are the heart and soul of CAP.

CAP also suffered from a double-whammy of spiraling tuition fees and dwindling yield rates on its trust fund assets. It could have taken the easy way out : tell planholders that it intended to pay no more than a 15% annual increase on tuition and other school fees (after all, that was the prevailing government ruling when they bought the plans). But, CAP decided to stick to its commitment to pay whatever the tuition fees would cost. This gesture of goodwill demonstrates the sincerity of CAP in wanting to stick to its commitment to planholders.

Some vested interests are maliciously misleading you and grossly painting a negative picture of CAP.

These unscrupulous persons are determined to bring down CAP's reputation and business leadership by advising planholders who aren't fully paid-up yet, to discontinue paying their plans or those who have fully paid-up, to surrender their plans.

Dear valued Planholders, do not be blinded by these wrong advisories. At the end of the day, if you follow them, you will all end up being victims of these misguided and misinformed elements and we both end up as losers.

Once a planholder stops paying a plan, it will make the plans lapse and therefore, it will no longer have any force and effect. This will also mean total loss of protection or limit the benefits due to the plan's termination value.

If you opt to surrender your plans, you would get only a percentage of your expected future benefit and in effect, even make it harder for both of us to solve this temporary problem.

College Assurance Plan's Vision and Mission – Helping Filipino Families cope with the spiraling cost of education.

CAP continues to believe in helping make the cost of quality education a reachable dream for every Filipino. In 25 years, we have faithfully served thousands of Filipino families with honor and distinction. Why some misguided elements would stop at nothing to bring this institution down... is beyond us. Together, let our voices be heard as we tell them... THEY CAN NEVER STOP A GOOD THING !

With faith in GOD, and with your steadfast and wholehearted support we shall overcome.

For further clarifications or inquiries, please visit or call :

CAP

CAP I Building
126 Amorsolo cor. Herrera Streets, Legazpi Village, Makati City
Ph: 817-6586; 759-2000 Fax: (0632) 818-0560

Plug VAT loopholes first, says House think tank

By Cynthia D. Balana

LIKE any other tax, a 12-percent value added tax on petroleum products is susceptible to technical smuggling and under reporting by big oil companies, according to the Congressional Planning and Budget Department (CPBD), the think tank of the House of Representatives.

Unless the government addresses the loopholes in the VAT system, weaknesses in the system can far outweigh its strengths, the CPBD said in "Q and A : Revenue Measures in the Petroleum Sector."

"VAT can be self-enforcing thus audit trail is better and should lead to lower evasion. Counterfeiting of invoices, however, can erode this self-enforcement," the CPBD said.

"Also, VAT is levied at each stage of production and distribution. This avoids the disadvantage of cascade turnover rate. These many stages involving VAT, nevertheless, make it difficult to monitor this tax," it said.

Built-in detection

Accordingly, maintaining the existing excise tax on petroleum products and including them under VAT would allow cross-validation, thus providing for a built-in detection of tax evasion.

Pro-VAT members of the House of Representatives had said that with the 2-percentage point increase in VAT, the government tax collection agencies should improve the monitoring of potential tax evaders.

The CPBD cited the following reasons for the lifting of the VAT exemption of petroleum products:

- The petroleum industry has been deregulated since 1996. Previously, VAT could not operate as a pass-on tax since the industry was under price regulation.
- Any exemption from VAT is a distortion in the tax system and a break in the VAT chain upon which lie the self-policing mechanism of the VAT.
- Should the exemptions be kept to a minimum, the capacity of a broad-based VAT to generate revenue can be substantial.

The CPBD said lifting the VAT exemption of petroleum products and slapping it with 12-percent VAT would provide government with P44 billion in added income, or nearly P6 billion more than the excise tax.

Multiplier effect

CPBD said lifting VAT exemptions of petroleum products and imposing them accordingly with an expanded VAT of 12 percent would drive pump prices up.

It said the multiplier effect of these increases would likely be felt on electric bills and prices of goods and services.

Following are the expected per liter pump price implications on petroleum with 12-percent VAT :

- 11.99 percent increase for premium gas from P26.93 to P30.16 a liter
- 11.99 percent for regular gas from P25.94 to P29.05
- 12.01 percent increase in Avturbo from P26.65 to P29.85
- 12 percent increase for kerosene from P24.01 to P26.89
- 12 percent increase for diesel from P23.41 to P26.22
- 11.97 percent increase for fuel oil from P15.04 to P26.54
- 11.98 percent for LPG from P16.36 to P18.32

On the other hand, the 12-percent VAT would also increase electricity rates.

Pass-on costs

The CPBD said slapping petroleum products with VAT would raise generation rates by an average 16 centavos per kilowatt hour.

Oil-based power plants were likely to charge nearly 30 centavos per kilowatt hour, the highest rate increase. The rates might be higher than estimated depending on the distribution utilities' additional pass-on-costs, CPBD said.

SPECIAL mention is made by President Bush of Safia Taleb al-Suhali, leader of the Iraqi Women's Political Council who was seated with US First Lady Laura Bush. She gives the victory sign showing one of her inked fingers used in the recent Iraqi election. Looking on from left are New Mexico teacher Lorna Clark and Army Staff Sgt. Norbert Lara. AP

STANDING ovation for President Bush after his State of the Union address from members of his Cabinet (foreground) and the members of the US Senate and the House of Representatives. Front row, from left are: Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman, Transportation Secretary Norman Minetta, outgoing Attorney General John Ashcroft, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Treasury Secretary John Snow and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. AP

Bush applauded 61 times in 53 minutes

From page A1

Harping on his inaugural address' theme of spreading democracy, Bush singled out Syria and Iran as nations that still export terror while he hailed the success of Sunday's elections in Iraq.

"And the victory of freedom in Iraq will strengthen a new ally in the war on terror, inspire democracy reformers from Damascus to Tehran, bring more hope and progress to a troubled region," he said.

$80B more for Iraq war

In a challenge to Iran's government, he told the country's citizens: "As you stand for your own liberty, America stands with you."

Bush also proposed $350 million in aid to the Palestinians to help promote a Middle East peace agreement.

"The goal of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, is within reach, and America will help them achieve that goal," he said.

With more than 1,400 Americans killed in Iraq and the United States spending more than $1 billion a week on the war, Bush urged Congress to support his request for an additional $80 billion. "During this time of war, we must continue to support our military and give them the tools for victory," he said.

While key allies like Germany and France opposed the war, Bush said his administration "will continue to build the coalitions that will defeat the dangers of our time."

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, delivering the Democratic response, challenged Bush on Iraq.

"We all know that the United States cannot stay in Iraq indefinitely and continue to be viewed as an occupying force," she said. "Neither should we slip out the back door, falsely declaring victory but leaving chaos. . . . We have never heard a clear plan from this administration for ending our presence in Iraq."

Social Security reform

Bush spent most of his speech on domestic affairs, largely on his plan to change the 70-year-old national pension system known as Social Security, a program so popular with Americans that it traditionally has been considered sacrosanct and untouchable.

He challenged a hesitant Congress to take political risks to "strengthen and save" Social Security, saying the nation's costliest social program was headed for bankruptcy without changes. Bush's plan would reduce guaranteed retirement benefits for younger Americans but would not affect checks for people now 55 or older.

Bush pledged to work with Congress "to find the most effective combination of reforms," although he has ruled out some remedies such as raising Social Security taxes.

Democrats said that Bush's proposal to divert Social Security revenues into private investment accounts was dangerous and that there were better ways to fix the program, the 70-year-old centerpiece of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930's.

Republicans stood and cheered when Bush urged lawmakers to approve "voluntary personal retirement accounts." Democrats sat in stony silence, underscoring the partisan divide on an issue likely to dominate the year in Congress.

Democrats also groaned and grumbled when Bush said Social Security would require drastically higher taxes, massive new borrowing or severe benefit cuts unless the system is changed.

Ban

Emboldened by his reelection, Bush demanded that lawmakers move on several controversial fronts, including liberalizing the nation's immigration laws, imposing limits on medical malpractice lawsuits, simplifying taxes and extending the life of the tax cuts enacted during his first term.

He also urged passage of long-stalled energy legislation and promised to send Congress a budget next week that holds discretionary spending below inflation.

In a nod to conservatives, he renewed support for a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage.

Transforming Social Security is a political gamble for Bush and for Republican allies wary of taking big political risks. While Bush cannot run for another term, most Republican lawmakers face reelection next year and are nervous about tampering with a system that Americans like and see no immediate need to overhaul.

Democrats, on the other hand, face a risk of appearing as obstructionists if they simply oppose all of Bush's plan.

"I know that none of these reforms would be easy," Bush said. "But we have to move ahead with courage and honesty because our children's retirement security is more important than partisan politics."

Bush did not disclose how deeply benefits would be cut for younger workers and he did not estimate how much it would cost to divert money from Social Security revenues into private investment accounts.

In the Democratic response to Bush's address, Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, said, "It's wrong to replace the guaranteed benefit that Americans have earned with a guaranteed benefit cut of 40 percent or more."

Special guests

Bush spoke from the rostrum of the House chamber, with Vice President Dick Cheney and House Speaker Dennis Hastert seated behind him. More than two dozen guests were invited to sit in the first lady's box with Laura Bush, including relatives of fallen US troops and a pilot who helped tsunami victims in South Asia.

The capital's political establishment, from members of Congress and the Cabinet to the diplomatic corps and Supreme Court justices, gathered for the address. Security was intense, as it was for Bush's inauguration Jan. 20. Police closed off streets surrounding the Capitol and its office buildings. *AP*

Rice rations yield '100-percent class attendance, weight gain'

From page A1

- Parents of students in some schools not covered by the program had been seriously considering "transferring" their children to the favored schools.
- In one school that she declined to name, street "bullies" had been harassing students heading home, again for the precious grains.

Until March 25

The FFS program will run until March 25, the end of the current school year, and will benefit around 50,000 students, Soliman said.

With each entitled to a kilo of rice for every day of class attendance, a student is expected to have brought home almost two cavans of rice at the end of the program's five-month run.

Gov't's immediate response

The FFS, along with a counterpart Food For Work program, was part of the government's immediate response to a Social Weather Stations survey report released in October showing a growing number of Filipinos experiencing hunger.

Safety nets

Still on poverty alleviation, Soliman also reported yesterday that the Department of Social Welfare and Development had begun "mapping out vulnerable areas" nationwide to provide people "safety nets" should the measure increasing the value-added tax be passed.

Earlier, Soliman conceded that the proposed 12-percent VAT—now undergoing deliberations at the Senate—would result in a "slight" increase in the prices of basic goods, like sardines, instant noodles, milk, sugar and cooking oil.

She yesterday said that the DSWD was identifying urban poor areas and rural communities barely reached by government services, and which the agency intended to "saturate with micro-financing assistance" and livelihood projects for the population to better cope with the VAT increase.

We passed tax bills, where's the pork? solon demands

From page A1

can fulfill our duties to our constituents," Cagas said in a phone interview yesterday.

The graft-ridden pork barrel comes from the national budget and finances the pet projects of legislators.

Malacañang earlier proposed a 40-percent cut in the 2005 pork barrel from P70 million to P40 million for each House member, and from P200 million to P120 million for each senator to rein in the budget deficit.

'Abolish us'

But the House restored the full amount allocated to each lawmaker.

Cagas noted that lawmakers had yet to receive the first of two tranches per year for their pork barrel, which is composed of the Priority Development Assistance Fund and the so-called public works fund.

"We don't know when (the first tranche will be released). We don't know how much (will be released)," he said.

Asked whether this sentiment was shared by most of his colleagues in the House, Cagas said: "Of course! Absolutely!"

"If they can't give us projects, (the administration) might as well abolish us (Congress)," Cagas said.

Cagas stood briefly on the floor on Wednesday afternoon to ask the House leadership about its supposed commitment to members of the House. He did not elaborate.

Fully restored

Asked yesterday by the INQUIRER to be more specific, he said: "I was just reminding the House leadership about our projects."

It was Cagas who caused Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. (LP, Camarines Sur) to admit last year that the House committee on appropriations, which Andaya chairs, had fully restored the pork barrel allocations for 2005 despite cuts imposed by the Palace.

Last November, Cagas interpellated Andaya immediately after the latter delivered his sponsorship speech on the proposed P907.6-billion national budget for this year.

Cagas asked Andaya whether each member of the House would have the same pork barrel allocation of P70 million in 2005 as in 2004.

Andaya replied that "it (pork barrel) is not something (for congressmen) to beg for" and that lawmakers had asked the appropriations panel to retain the same pork barrel allocation for 2005.

He said that because of such request, his committee had retained P70 million in pork barrel for each member of the House. A gleeful Cagas responded then: "Thank you. You are a hero."

Pork depends on bicam

While the House and Senate had separately approved the 2005 national budget, representatives from both chambers have yet to meet in bicameral conference to reconcile their respective versions of the appropriations bill.

"That (pork barrel amount) depends on the bicam," Cagas said.

Under the pork barrel system, lawmakers don't receive cash for projects but identify projects for funding by the government.

"It's not money we are waiting for but the projects," he said.

Source of graft

Various sectors, including the Church, have sought the abolition of the pork barrel, saying that its is a source of kickbacks for members of Congress.

Resorting to line-item budgeting is the best way to ensure transparency on how lawmakers spend the pork, according to Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr.

In line-item budgeting, lawmakers identify projects to be included in the proposed national budget. In the past, projects to be funded by pork barrel were not identified under the lump sum scheme.

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Editor **Ester G. Dipasupil** ■ *Assistant Editor* **Cenon B. Bibe**

NBI swoops down on alleged sex den inside posh Manila hotel

By Leila B. Salaverria

AFTER years of doing business in apparent safety, an alleged prostitution den inside a luxurious hotel in Manila was raided by law enforcement authorities.

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) raided the Skyline massage parlor, which takes up the entire 8th floor of the Grand Boulevard Hotel, formerly Silahis Hotel, along Roxas Boulevard.

Agents of the NBI's National Capital Region Division, who participated in the raid, said four of the massage parlor's operators and 25 suspected female sex workers were rounded up during the raid Wednesday evening.

An agent told the INQUIRER that the massage parlor that had been operating for more than three years was believed to have been offering more than massage treatments.

Skyline allegedly offered sexual services to clients, who were allowed to get the services of as many women as they wanted, the agent who requested anonymity said.

The agent said the massage parlor zealously guarded its services and clients, even banning cell phones on the 8th floor lest the phones be used to conduct surveillance operations.

Once inside the parlor, clients are reportedly allowed to pick a woman or women from a lineup. Then, they are given a room on the same floor.

The price for the services of a woman ranged from P1,300 to P1,500, said the NBI agent. Clients were charged separately for the room.

Among the evidence reportedly seized during the raid was a list of women's code names detailing the number of times they had been hired and how much they charged or earned.

The bureau reportedly only learned of the alleged prostitution at Skyline following a tip from a media worker.

However, law enforcement agencies reportedly knew about the alleged sex den's operations four years ago.

The relative safety in which the alleged prostitution thrived for years arouse suspicions that the den enjoyed the protection of certain public officials.

Despite the arrests, the NBI withheld the names of the supposed operators of the alleged prostitution house.

Agents said the 25 women rounded up refused to cooperate after their arrest, even insisting on not disclosing their age.

The women would be subjected to dental examinations to find out if any of them are minors.

Where's our raise, employees ask mayor

By Nancy C. Carvajal

PASAY CITY court employees are protesting the alleged discrimination in allowance increases granted by the local government.

The employees' sentiments were contained in a manifesto signed by close to 300 court employees from the Regional Trial Court and the Manila Trial Court.

"We work just as hard as the other employees. Why can't we have the same amount," said Ellen Serrano, local president of the court employees' association.

The employees, who are technically under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, were asking for a P200 to P400 raise in their monthly stipends from the local government.

"The judges were given a P5,000 increase in their allowances," Serrano said, adding that the judges now receive P15,000 as additional benefits from the city government each month.

As early as December last year, Mayor Wenceslao Trinidad had promised to give them an increase, Serrano said.

Court rank and file employees receive an P800 allowance from the local government.

Trinidad, however, told the INQUIRER that the local government is not required to give "extra" income to employees not under City Hall. "The allowances extended to them comes from the generosity of the local government," the mayor said.

"Times are hard, and as it is, the city is having a difficult time collecting taxes from government agencies," Trinidad added.

Python springs surprise

By Luige A. del Puerto

A HOMEOWNER in Marikina City was surprised at dawn yesterday to find a 10-foot python coiled in his house.

The python, the second to be found in recent months, had wrapped itself around a veranda post of a house inside Vista Village in Barangay Sto. Niño.

Village officials said they got a call from a resident at about 4:30 a.m.

Apparently, the resident was on his way out of his house on Claro M. Recto Street when he ran into the snake.

Watchmen who quickly went to the house were surprised to discover the reptile tightly entwined around the post.

The watchmen wrestled with the snake to loosen its grip on the post.

The snake was later brought to the Parks and Wildlife center in Quezon City.

Last year, residents also found an 11.5-foot python in the community.

Although a python poses little danger to people, it can devour livestock and pets.

Drugs threaten Metro high schools

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

ABOUT 10 percent of high schools in Metro Manila have a drug problem among its students, results of random drug tests conducted by health and education authorities showed.

In problem schools, as many as one in every five students could be hooked on drugs, officials citing the study said.

Considering the small number of schools sampled in the mandatory campus testing, the estimate may prove conservative.

Last year, the health and education departments covered six regions for the tests.

For each region, 700 private and public high schools were randomly selected. Of these, 17 were randomly picked for the actual testing.

From each school, 30 students were randomly picked but only 20 underwent a drug test.

Region VII had the highest number of students who tested positive for either shabu (metamphetamine hydrochloride) or marijuana, with 21 students. Caraga followed with 19; Region X, 14; Region XI, 11; National Capital Region, four; and Region III, three.

Based on the results, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said one could get a fairly good estimate of the drug problem in schools.

2 out of 17 in Metro

At a recent meeting of the Dangerous Drugs Board, Dayrit said that in Metro Manila, two out of the 17 randomly selected schools had students who were confirmed drug users.

This would mean that 10 to 12 per cent of Metro Manila high schools have a drug problem, according to the health secretary.

In one school, three of the 20 randomly selected students tested positive; in another school, one student was confirmed positive.

Dayrit said that in the first school, 5 to 10 percent of the student population were into drugs. In the second school, 15 to 20 percent, or one in every five students, were into drugs.

Dayrit said the health and education departments would conduct drug tests in all 700 randomly selected high schools to estimate the drug problem in each school. The education department said campus drug testing would also be done in the 11 remaining regions by March this year.

Drug users are not asked to leave, but are required to undergo counseling for six months.

This year, the DepEd is set to conduct random drug tests on public school teachers. The Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 also requires drug tests for college students, government employees, the police and military, and those running for public office.

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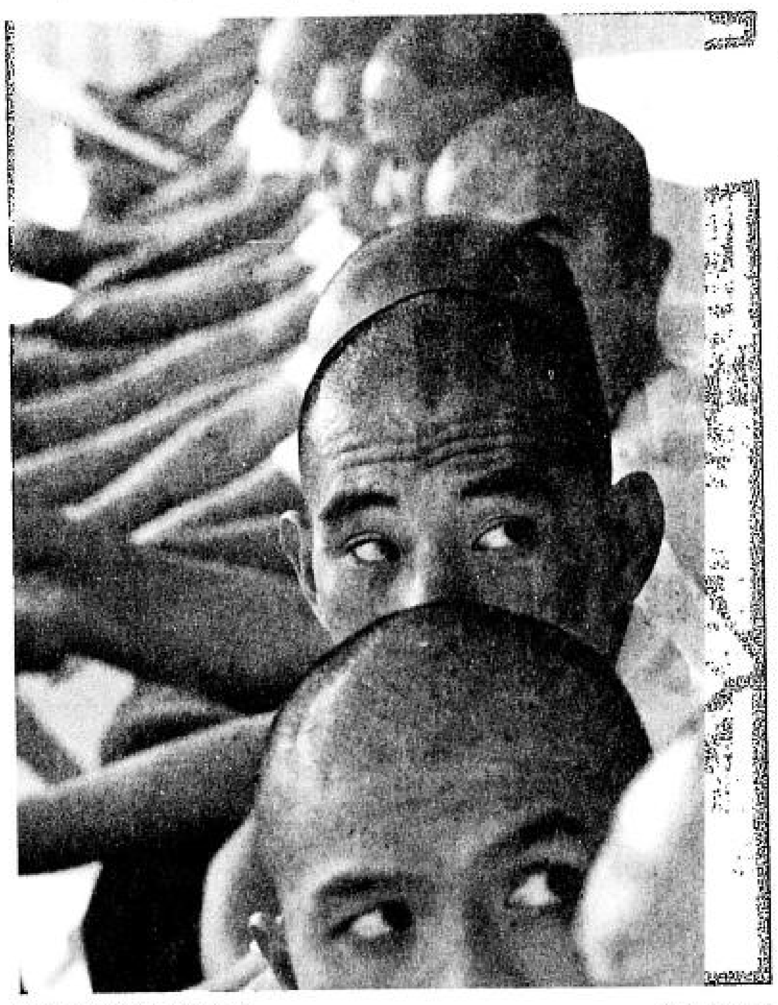
RUDY ESPERAS

PHONE PALS
A boy does stretch exercises while waiting for his companion to place her call.



BALD VENTURE JOAN BONDOC
Bald-headed police recruits wait for the next training program in Camp Crame.

C5-Kalayaan now open to motorists

By Irene C. Perez

MOTORISTS may now heave a sigh of relief with the opening of the C5-Kalayaan intersection to traffic.

The Makati Department of Public Safety (DPS) said the move was in response to complaints from motorists about clogged-up roads and vehicular accidents reportedly caused by U-turn slots put up by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA).

The MMDA had barricaded the intersection with fences to make way for the U-turn slots in October last year. Around 30 men from the Makati DPS and City Engineering Department tore the fences down yesterday.

MMDA Executive Director Angelito Vergel de Dios, however, said he does not believe the U-turn slots had been the source of accidents. "The intersections are more fatal to the public," he said. "Maybe the motorists should be asked what they think of the U-turn slots."

Hermenigildo San Miguel, Makati DPS director, said that the road closure not only "worsened traffic in the area during peak hours, but has lead to an increase in vehicular accidents."

The Makati Police Traffic Enforcement Unit reported some 45 accidents in the area, while a Barangay East Rembo report said there had been 56 vehicular mishaps since the road closure.

There are two proposals for the intersection. The Department of Public Works and Highways plans to build an underpass, while the MMDA wants an "elevated U-turn" slot, San Miguel said. While these projects are under study, the Makati government chose to open the intersection to traffic and clear it of U-turn slots, he added.

Vergel de Dios said the MMDA believes the area is a national road, not a city road. He added that if there had been accidents, it could be the fault of motorists.

Trader resists robbers, shot dead

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

HE REFUSED to hand over his money.

This angered four robbers who killed a businessman and wounded his business partner in Quezon City in a daring afternoon robbery yesterday.

The robbers also took with them P1 million the victims had just withdrawn from a bank, police said.

Nelson Yu, 49, of Caloocan City died of several gunshot wounds, while Romeo Chan, 42, of Manila City, remained in critical condition.

The victims were on board a black Toyota Revo after withdrawing money from a Banco de Oro branch at around 2 p.m. when the robbers struck, according to Central Police District Director Nicasio Radovan.

While on a full stop at the corner of P. Tuazon and Maria Clara Streets in Barangay Lourdes, four robbers on board two Kawasaki motorcycles blocked their path, Radovan told the INQUIRER.

Armed with handguns, the robbers ordered Yu to give them the money he had just withdrawn from the bank.

Yu refused to do so, prompting the robbers to open fire.

After shooting Yu and Chan, the robbers sped off with the P1 million.

The victims were taken to the Sta. Teresita Hospital where Yu was declared dead.

Police said that the robbers apparently knew that the pair was carrying a big amount of money with them, and had tailed the victims from the bank until they reached the intersection where they decided to pull off the holdup.

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0465, Series of 2005.

SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Manguiat

BASKETBALL: US NCAA—NC State vs North Carolina; 8 a.m. (r-4 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.); ESPN—The Wolfpack take on their rival Tar Heels.
NBA—Cavs vs Heat; 9 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); Solar Sports; Spurs vs Lakers; 11:30 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); STAR Sports—LeBron visits the Love Shaq while San Antonio takes on LA.

BILLIARDS: Rack 'Em Up—Reyes vs Bustamante; 7 p.m.; ESPN—The Philippines' finest cue artists Efren "Bata" Reyes and Francisco "Django" Bustamante try to outplay each other.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Ababa hangs on to 3-shot margin /A27
- Team Pacquiao disintegrating /A30

- Ginebra goes for 3-0; TNT stays confident/A26

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Jewels glow, tie P'masters

By Jasmine W. Payo

GAME TOMORROW (*Makati Coliseum*)
2 p.m.—PBL Achievement Awards
3:30 p.m.—Welcoat vs Montaña

ALEX Compton made sure the Montaña Jewels won't blow another chance.

Compton provided the leadership down the stretch as the Jewels survived another second-half scare from the Welcoat Paintmasters, 55-48, to level the PBL Open Championship series yesterday at the Makati Coliseum.

"We really tightened up on our defense in the last two minutes," said coach Robert Sison. "We weren't shooting but we were defending well. Game 1 was a big lesson for us and at least somehow, we were able to check our skid in the third quarter."

Compton led the Jewels with 13 points but Montaña also got a big lift from Al Vergara and Paul Guerrero.

The Jewels held a narrow 49-46 advantage but a Jon Dan Salvador basket gave them a 51-46 cushion in the final two minutes.

Marvin Ortiguerra's free throws again cut the deficit to three points, 51-48, but Eugene Tan's turnover in the dying seconds proved costly for the Paintmasters.

Compton finally secured Montaña's win by sinking two charities for a 53-48 lead with only 14 seconds remaining.

The Jewels closed the second period with a 17-2 outburst behind Francis Mercado, Compton and Vergara to build a 32-21 halftime cushion.

As in Game 1, the Paintmasters rallied and threatened the Jewels in the third period.

Welcoat first sliced the lead to a single digit, 34-27, after Ortiguerra's back-to-back triples. Anthony Washington then drilled eight straight points capped by a three-pointer to put the Paintmasters within a point, 38-37.

Barely managing to stay on top, 41-39, at the end of the period, Guerrero and Compton then teamed up to push the Jewels ahead at 48-39.

But the Paintmasters again piled seven points to move within a basket at 48-46.

Ortiguerra finished with a game-high 15 points, while Washington posted another double-double performance with 13 points and 14 rebounds.

Welcoat gave up 22 points from a total of 34 turnovers, but won the rebounding battle, 46-33.

Salvador struggled offensively for the second straight time, finishing with a conference-low six points.

Welcoat took Game 1 with a 73-65 come-from-behind win last Tuesday.

The scores:

MONTAÑA 55—Compton 13, Vergara 9, Guerrero 7, Mercado 6, Salvador 6, Capus 5, Dela Cuesta 4, Baguion 3, Espiritu 2, Magpayo 0, Juntilla 0.

WELCOAT 48—Ortiguerra 15, Washington 13, Coching 5, Najorda 4, Sta. Maria 4, Tan 2, Reyes 2, Guevarra 2, Tolomia 1, Dy 0, Gamboa 0, Estrada 0.

Quarters: 11-16, 32-21, 41-39, 55-48.

COMPTON: Leader by example

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Guidelines up for SEAG fund

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINE Sports Commission and the First Gentleman Foundation will lay down specific guidelines for national sports associations which are set to receive financial assistance from their respective "godfathers" starting next month.

Officials of the agency yesterday met with FG Foundation project director Tessa Mangahas and Philippine Olympic Committee secretary general Steve Hontiveros to draft the mechanics of how to avail of the P150 million committed by the country's top corporations and businessmen.

The fund was raised during a recent pledging session organized by First Gentleman Mike Arroyo in Malacañang to boost the training of some 600 national athletes for the Southeast Asian Games in November.

The idea, according to the officials, is to prevent what happened in the last SEAG where some NSAs went direct to their benefactors to fund their training development

"That practice might turn off the sponsors, plus it won't make for a systematic disbursement of funds," said a PSC official, who added the initial release of funds is expected next month as athletes start competing in international tournaments.

Though the "godfather scheme" directly link the sponsors and the NSAs, officials said the FG Foundation will monitor the disbursement to make sure the money is spent where it is needed.

San Miguel Corporation, which is the biggest donor with a pledge of P100 million for 10 sports, has reportedly assigned 10 different people to act as conduit between the giant corporation and the NSAs.

Sources said among those being tapped by SMC are former national basketball players Chito Loyzaga and Hector Calma, who are the team managers of SMB and Purefoods, respectively, in the Philippine Basketball Association.

The PSC, which also gives financial assistance to the NSAs on a regular basis, also wanted to make sure there are no double claims from the NSAs especially in relation to the SEAG preparation.

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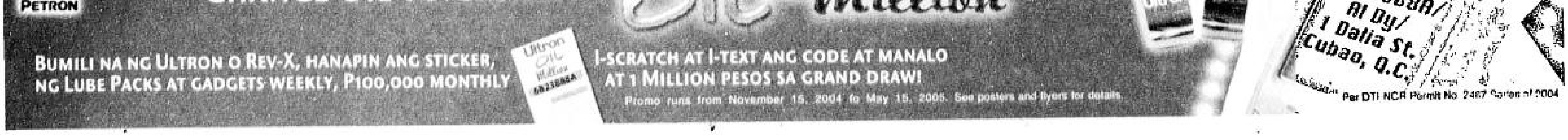
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Ginebra goes for 3-0; TNT stays confident

Asi lawyer files contempt rap vs Eala

TALK 'N TEXT has been preparing two strategies since the early part of the conference, one with Asi Taulava around and the other with the 2003 MVP sitting at the sidelines.

GAME TODAY (*Araneta Coliseum*)
(Game 3 of best-of-seven Finals)
7:10 p.m.—Barangay Ginebra vs Talk 'N Text

After coming close to beating Barangay Ginebra in Game 2 without Taulava, the Phone Pals are even more determined in today's 7:10 p.m. Game 3 of the Gran Matador PBA Philippine Cup Finals against the Kings at the Araneta Coliseum.

"We never lose hope (on Taulava). Somebody out there would be merciful enough or would at least allow us to have fun," said coach Joel Banal, who continued to hope his prized center would be allowed to play again.

Barangay Ginebra grabbed a 2-0 lead in their best-of-seven series following a 106-105 win in Game 2 and Talk 'N Text's forfeiture of Game 1, which the Phone Pals easily won, 89-71.

The Phone Pals came to within seconds of tying the series until Eric Menk drove in with the decisive basket with five seconds left.

Banal and the Phone Pals, however, are treading on familiar grounds, having climbed from a 0-2 deficit in the best-of-seven 2003 All-Filipino Cup Finals against the Coca-Cola Tigers before capturing their first franchise crown.

"We don't want to think about that. It's hard to repeat that feat but it's possible," said Banal. "We'll just take it one game at a time. We will treat each game like it's the last game of our lives. If we could do that, then we have a chance.".

But the Kings have also vowed to play as hard in Game 3 as they attempt to move a game shy of capturing a second straight title after the Fiesta Conference crown last conference.

"For sure, they'll be more focused and determined to prove a point," said Ginebra coach Siot Tanquingcen. "We just have to match their intensity because its going to be a nail-biter all the way."

Mark Telan and Victor Pablo were sharp in Game 2 but Talk 'N Text concentrated its offense on guards Willie Miller and Jimmy Alapag. Miller went on to register a triple-double, the first by a homegrown player in four seasons.

"They are going to their guards. Their offense basically revolves around Alapag and Miller, who create shots not only for themselves but for their teammates as well," said Tanquingcen.

Eric Menk and Rommel Adducul were almost unstoppable in the paint as they wound up with double-double figures in scoring and rebounding in Game 2. Mark Caguioa, Rodney Santos and Andy Seigle also came up with big shots down the stretch.

"It's hard to play after a forfeiture," said Banal. "We're affected by it in the early stages of Game 2 before we sort of recovered in the second half. Just the same, I credit my players for trying their best."

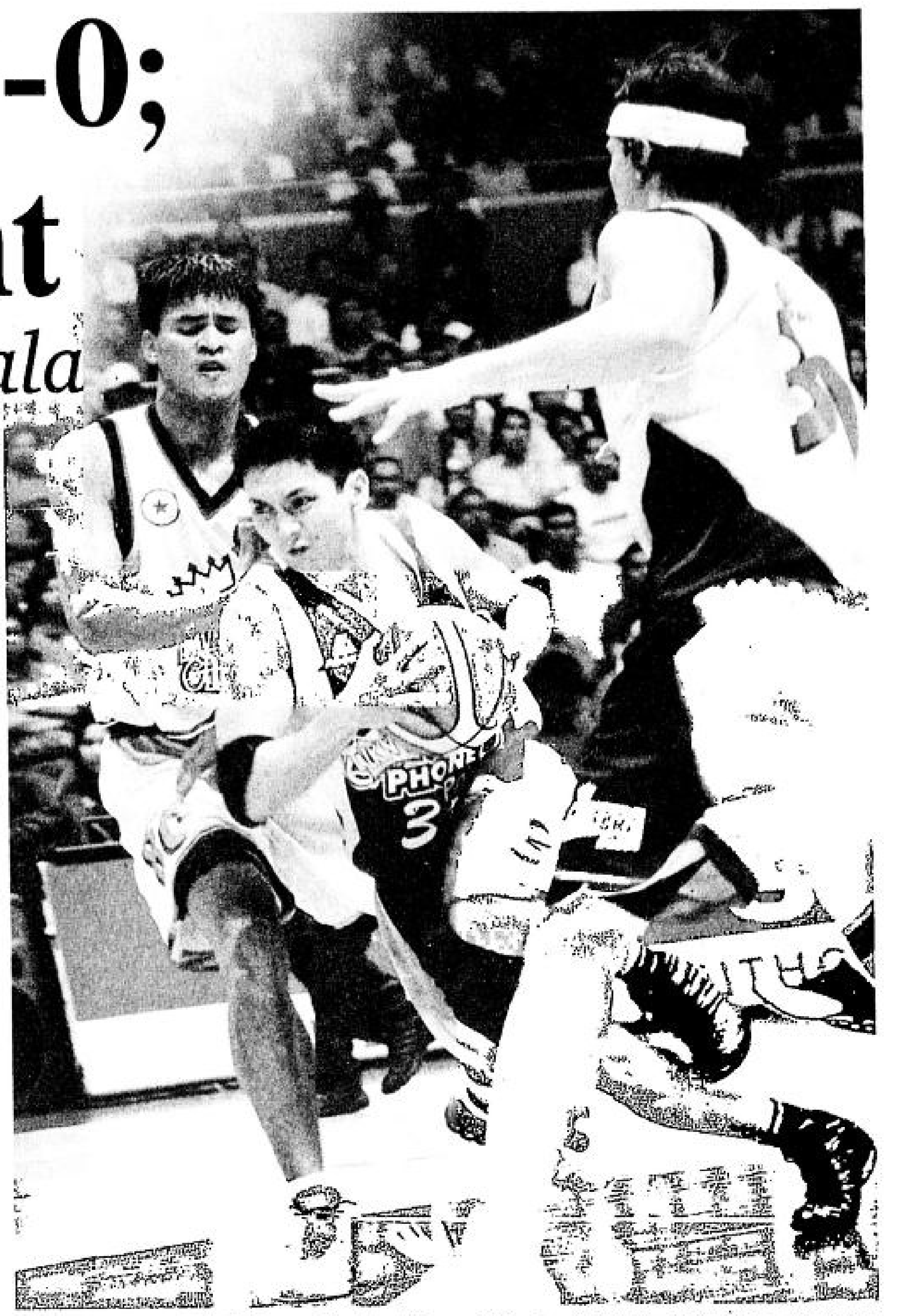
Commissioner Noli Eala forfeited Game 1 in favor of Ginebra after Talk 'N Text fielded in Taulava, who, despite a court order allowing him to play, was still deemed ineligible by the league.

The Phone Pals benched Taulava in Game 2 but appealed the decision of the commissioner before the PBA Board of Governors, which will rule on the controversy with finality within the week.

Taulava, through his lawyer, Eduardo Francisco, yesterday initiated contempt proceedings against Eala before Branch 222 of the Regional Trial Court of Quezon City.

In his petition to cite Eala in contempt of court, Taualava complained of Eala's "continuing refusal" to obey the court's order last Jan. 26 for the PBA to immediately allow him to play in the PBA by setting aside his suspension.

Taulava prayed through his lawyer that upon notice and hearing, that an order be issued for the imprisonment of Eala until he complies with the January 26 writ of preliminary injunction order issued by the court. *June Navarro*



JIMMY Alapag of Talk 'N Text splits the defense of Ginebra's Eric Menk (right) and Sunday Salvacion in Game 2 of their PBA Philippine Cup Finals. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

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TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR PHIBAF 2005

Feb. 11 - FIRST FIESTA DAY (Friday)

Hot Air Balloon Flight	05:30 - 07:00
Flag Jump	06:00 - 06:15
Sky Diving exhibition	07:00 - 07:30
Micro light Demonstration	07:30 - 08:40
RC Air Show	08:40 - 09:30
Sky diving exhibition	09:30 - 10:00
Aerobatic Exhibition	10:00 - 11:00
Light Airplane Balloon Bursting Competition	11:00 - 13:30
Sky diving exhibition	13:30 - 14:00
X-Air Formation Flying	14:00 - 14:45
AOPA-P Regional Meet	14:00 - 16:00
RC Air Show	15:45 - 16:30
Airplane vs. Motorcycle race	16:30 - 17:00
Ultra-light formation flying	17:00 - 17:20
Hot Air Balloon flying	17:20 - 18:00

Feb. 12 - SECOND FIESTA DAY (Saturday)

Hot Air Balloon Flight	05:30 - 07:00
Flag Jump	06:00 - 06:15
Aerobatic Show	07:00 - 07:30
Helicopter Flyby and Exhibition	07:40 - 08:30
Departure and Fly-By of Airplane Rally for Baguio	08:30 - 09:30
Ultra light Fly-By	09:30 - 10:20
Radio Control Aircraft Air Show	10:20 - 11:00
Sky Diving Exhibition	11:00 - 11:30
Ultra-light airplane bomb dropping	11:30 - 12:30
Kite Fighting Flying Exhibition	12:30 - 13:30
Arrival of Airplane Rally	13:30 - 14:30
Sky Diving Exhibition	14:30 - 15:00
Aerobatic Show	15:00 - 16:00
Airplane vs. Motorcycle race	16:00 - 16:30
RC Air Show	16:30 - 17:15
Hot Air Balloon Flights	17:45 - 18:00
Hot Air Balloon night Glow	18:45 - 19:30
ABS-CBN Concert	18:45 - 23:30

Feb. 13 - THIRD FIESTA DAY (Sunday)

Hot Air Balloon Flight	05:30 - 07:00
Flag Jump	06:00 - 06:15
Ultra-light aircraft Fly-By	07:30 - 08:00
Aerobatic Exhibition	08:00 - 08:30
RC Air Show	08:30 - 09:30
Helicopter Flying Exhibition	09:30 - 10:00
Missionary HelioSTOL Aircraft Demo	10:00 - 10:30
Sky Diving Exhibition	10:30 - 11:00
Light Airplane Balloon Bursting competition	11:00 - 12:30
Kite Fighting Flying demonstration	12:30 - 13:30
Ultra-Light Flying display	13:30 - 14:30
RC Air Show	14:30 - 15:15
Sky Diving Exhibition	15:15 - 15:45
Aerobatic Display	15:45 - 16:30
Airplane vs. Motorcycle race	16:30 - 17:00
Ultra Light Fly-By	17:00 - 17:30
RC Air Show	17:30 - 17:45
Hot Air Balloon Flight	17:45 - 18:15
Awards Night and Crew Party	19:30

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'Decide everything on the hardcourt'

EALA

PBA Commissioner Noli Eala, saying the petition for contempt filed by Asi Taulava against him was just part of a legal strategy, called for a final decision "on the basketball court."

But this does not mean he would not face his detractors in court, Eala stressed.

"I'm not bothered by it (contempt) as long as the integrity of the championship is kept whole," said Eala.

He clarified that the contempt charge has just started and nothing's final yet.

"I can't stop them but I stand on my ground that I have not committed any thing wrong," Eala said.

Taulava's lawyer, Eduardo Francisco, filed a petition for contempt against Eala yesterday morning after Talk 'N Text decided not to suit up its premiere slotman for Game 2.

"They have to defend Taulava to the hilt. I don't want to decide the championship in the court room, let the title be decided on the basketball court," said Eala.

In another development, PBA Chair Buddy Encarnado has set a special board meeting today to act on the appeal of Talk 'N Text following the league's forfeiture of Game 1 of the PBA Philippine Cup Finals series between the Phone Pals and the Barangay Ginebra Kings. TNT actually won that one, 89-81.

"There's no need to prolong the agony or ecstasy of any of the parties that's why I called for a special board meeting," said Encarnado. *June Navarro*

Praise and farce

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

TWO decisions deserve praise.

One, Ricky Vargas not fielding Asi Taulava in Game 2 of the Gran Matador PBA Philippine Cup Finals on Wednesday.

Two, PBA Commissioner Noli Eala forfeiting Talk 'N Text's victory over Ginebra on Sunday.

In benching Taulava, Vargas, TNT's governor to the PBA board, said: "To avoid any disruption of the championship games and to ensure the public's continuing support for the games, the Talk 'N Text team will not field Asi Taulava in today's (Wednesday) game."

In awarding Game 1 to Ginebra despite the Phone Pals' 89-71 victory over the Gin Kings on Sunday, Eala cited a PBA rule that awards a game to a team that has battled a team using an ineligible player regardless of the game's outcome.

TNT fielded in Taulava in Game 1, resulting in Eala's decision to forfeit the game in favor of Ginebra because under PBA rules, Taulava is ineligible to play because his suspension remains.

As a result, Ginebra now holds a 2-0 edge over TNT.

Eala's move was a tough act to follow, if not a class act in itself. It is so because Eala ignored an order by a Quezon City court reinstating Taulava's rights to play in the league.

Eala argued that the court order is not yet final and therefore cannot be executed since the PBA had filed a motion for reconsideration immediately after the league had received notice of the court decision.

It still bothers me to this day why courts of law continue to intrude into sports.

Tournaments and sports associations have their own rules that make them intrinsically off limits to our courts.

What the Quezon City court should have done was to immediately throw away TNT's case since entertaining it, as it already did, was a direct intrusion into the purely internal affairs of the PBA. Why TNT did that in the first place boggles the mind.

A desperation move by TNT?

Nothing wrong in trying?

TNT that hungry for a title it'd do everything to ensure victory—even if achieved with the aid of judicial mugging?

I don't know why it really had to go through that trouble. I mean why did TNT field in Taulava in Game 1, both in obedience to the court order and in defiance of a league ban on Asi, only to decide to bench Taulava in Game 2.

And hear this: Ricky Vargas has said he still doesn't know if he'll field in Asi or not in Game 3 of the best-of-seven finals.

"We are taking things one game at a time," he said.

Uh-oh. What's this a carnival? Farce?

Methinks you cannot just go to a court of law to question a ruling in a tournament/league that you have sworn to uphold and protect the minute you were accepted as a member.

By going to court, did TNT not abandon that pledge?

When TNT went to court to ask the court to declare as questionable a ruling of the league that TNT is a part of, I say TNT was out of line, if not out of order. Not even low-bat. No-bat. Dead.

People have asked me: Why did Eala, with the help of the entire PBA personnel minus the entire TNT crew, not stop Taulava from entering the hard court in Game 1, bodily carrying him out of the arena maybe if he resisted being barred from playing? His suspension would merit such an act, they argued.

No need, I said.

Not that the 6-foot-9 Asi is too heavy you need at least 20 North Harbor stevedores to yank him out of the court.

We are adults here, bebe, supposed to be civil and polite.

If TNT defies the suspension and allows Asi to play, he'll be allowed to play by all means. But then, TNT takes the risk of receiving sanctions—even getting expelled—if it's in the best interest of the league.

No team, let alone a player, can be as big as any league in the world.

I wonder now, did the mountain go to Mohammad?

But that's another story.

***

FASTBREAK. It is the fervent prayer of Tess G. Landrito of DHL to see Shell players and Shell coaches Leo Austria and Dayong Mendoza grace the Foundation Day festivities of the San Roque Catholic School in Alabang on Feb. 10-12. Tess, the PTAC president of the school, wrote Shell Team Manager Bobby Kanapi: "Our students are clamoring for the personal appearance of your players, especially Ervin Sotto, Richie Alvarez, Chris Jackson, Tony Dela Cruz and Ronald Tubid." Knowing Bob, he'll gladly say, "Yes."...Bon voyage, Kanor and *Atchie* Anching, as you fly back to your base in Honolulu. *Hasta la vista*.

Star Sports showing Spurs versus Lakers

THE LEAGUE-LEADING San Antonio Spurs put their best record on the line when they visit the undermanned LA Lakers in the NBA today at 11:30 a.m. (replay at 9 p.m.) live on STAR Sports.

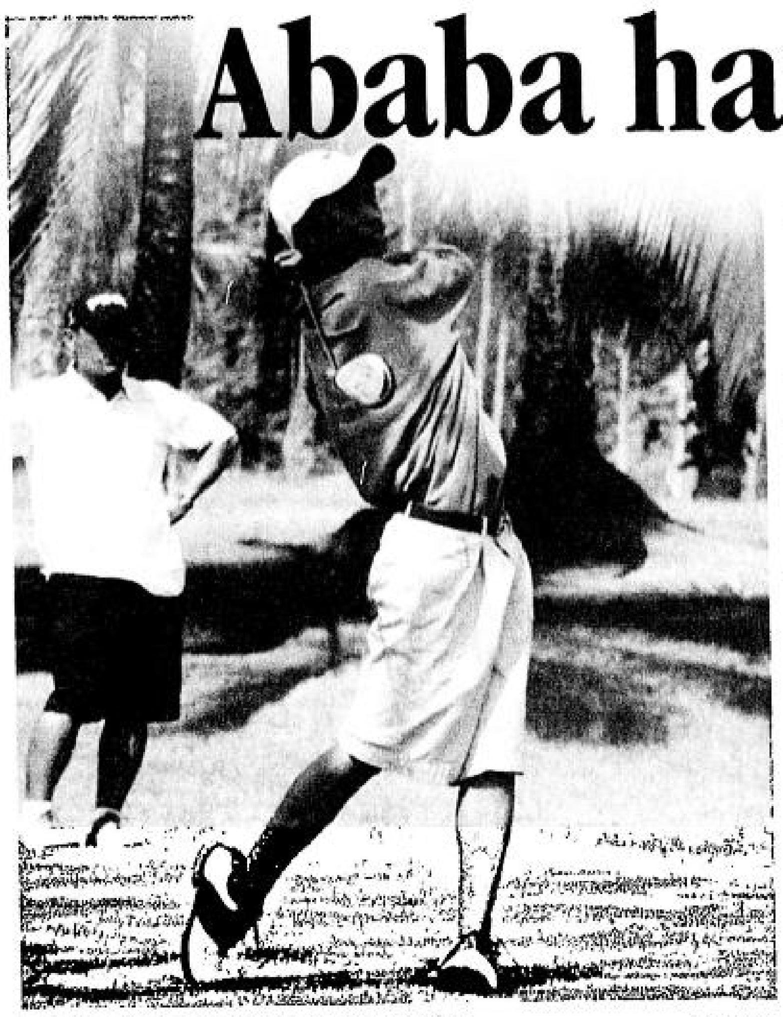
San Antonio overtook the Phoenix Suns for the league's top spot after the Spurs won their last three assignments.

The Spurs, who are led by two-time MVP Tim Duncan, point guard Tony Parker and shooting guard Manu Ginobili, will be bringing their 37–10 record to the Staples Center.

Meanwhile, LA has struggled without leading scorer Kobe Bryant as the Lakers have gone 5–4 since the 6-foot-6 shooting guard went down with a sprained ankle against Cleveland.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Ababa hangs on to 3-shot margin



JONEL Ababa tees off at hole 1 yesterday.

JESS YUSON

By Musong R. Castillo

CANLUBANG, Laguna—Jonel Ababa survived a brutal day at Canlubang's North course, using an overnight cushion to stay on top of the National Caddies Open after three rounds yesterday.

The tiny 20-year-old from Davao signed for an 81, nine-over at the coconut-tree lined layout, and saw his commanding six-shot lead prune down to just three by new pursuer and Apo Golf buddy Elmer Saban, who turned in a 74 for 234.

A lot of the pacesetters failed to solve the howling gusts, with Jerome Malaga, second at the start of the day, shooting an 83 for a 238 total in a tie with three others for eighth in this event presented by the FG Sports Foundation, Pagcor and San Miguel Corp.

"This is the first time I saw this course, and it was very difficult," said Ababa in Filipino. "It was a beautiful course, but the winds made it truly difficult to score, especially for most of us who played this for the first time."

Zambo's Mark Fernando turned in the first subpar round of the tournament, shooting a 70 built around five birdies and three bogeys to tie for third with the Labajo brothers, Mario and Joseph, with 234 totals heading into the final 18 holes of the event backed by Nike and the Philippine Sports Commission.

Mario, who works at the nine-hole Matina course in Davao, turned in his third straight 78, while Joseph, who is representing Valley, signed for a 76.

Wack Wack's Antonio Depelo had a 79 for 237 like Alfredo Repato (77) of Nueva Ecija, and will enjoy a distinct advantage over the rest of the field, which will see the East layout of the famous Mandaluyong course for the first time today.

Twenty-two players made the 246 cut-off, with the survivors motoring to Pasig for their sleeping quarters at the Philsports Complex in Pasig.

Meanwhile, Rafel Rex Doronio of Nueva Ecija was disqualified for signing the wrong scorecard.

In a related development, ties for first and third will be broken via a three-hole playoff on Nos. 8, 9 and 10. Should scores remain tied, the playoff will continue sudden-death style.

Fernando, who first worked as a caddy in Malaysia 10 years ago when he was 13, had an 81 and an 83 earlier at the Calatagan layout in Batangas and is now in solid contention for one of three berths to the long-term NCO program.

Malaga dropped into a tie with Aguinaldo's Jessie Marcelo (79) and Valley's Danilo Nivera (78), eight shots off the pace.

The top scores:

1. Ababa, Jonel, Apo (81-230), 2. Elmer Saban, Apo (74-233) 3. Joseph Labajo, Valley (76-234), Mario Labajo, Matina (78-234), Mark Fernando, Zamboanga (70-234), 6. Antonio Depelo, WW (79-237), Alfredo Repato, Nueva Ecija (77-237) 8. Jerome Malaga, Bacolod (83-238), Jessie Marcelo, Aguinaldo (79-238), Danilo Nivera, Valley (78-238).

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3 regions field nat'l meet bets

THREE regions have submitted their representatives for the National Students Basketball Championships slated in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, from Feb. 27-March 5.

According to a report received by the secretariat of the organizing Basketball Association of the Philippines, the early birds are Region VIII (Western Visayas), Region II (Cagayan Valley) and region VIII (Eastern Visayas).

LIM

Region VIII director Dr. Lucrecio Calo said South Leyte School University (SLSU) will represent the region in the collegiate division, while the high school division will be represented by Asian Foundation College.

Region II will be represented by Tuguegarao College (seniors) and La Sallete High School (juniors) while Region VI will be sending West Negros College (seniors) and Tay Tung High School (juniors).

Already seeded to the finals are defending champion Philippine Maritime Institute (seniors) and San Beda College (juniors), both from the National Capital Region.

In other developments, Negros Oriental Gov. George Arnaiz has already formed working committees for the event also known as the National Inter-Collegiate and Secondary Basketball Championships.

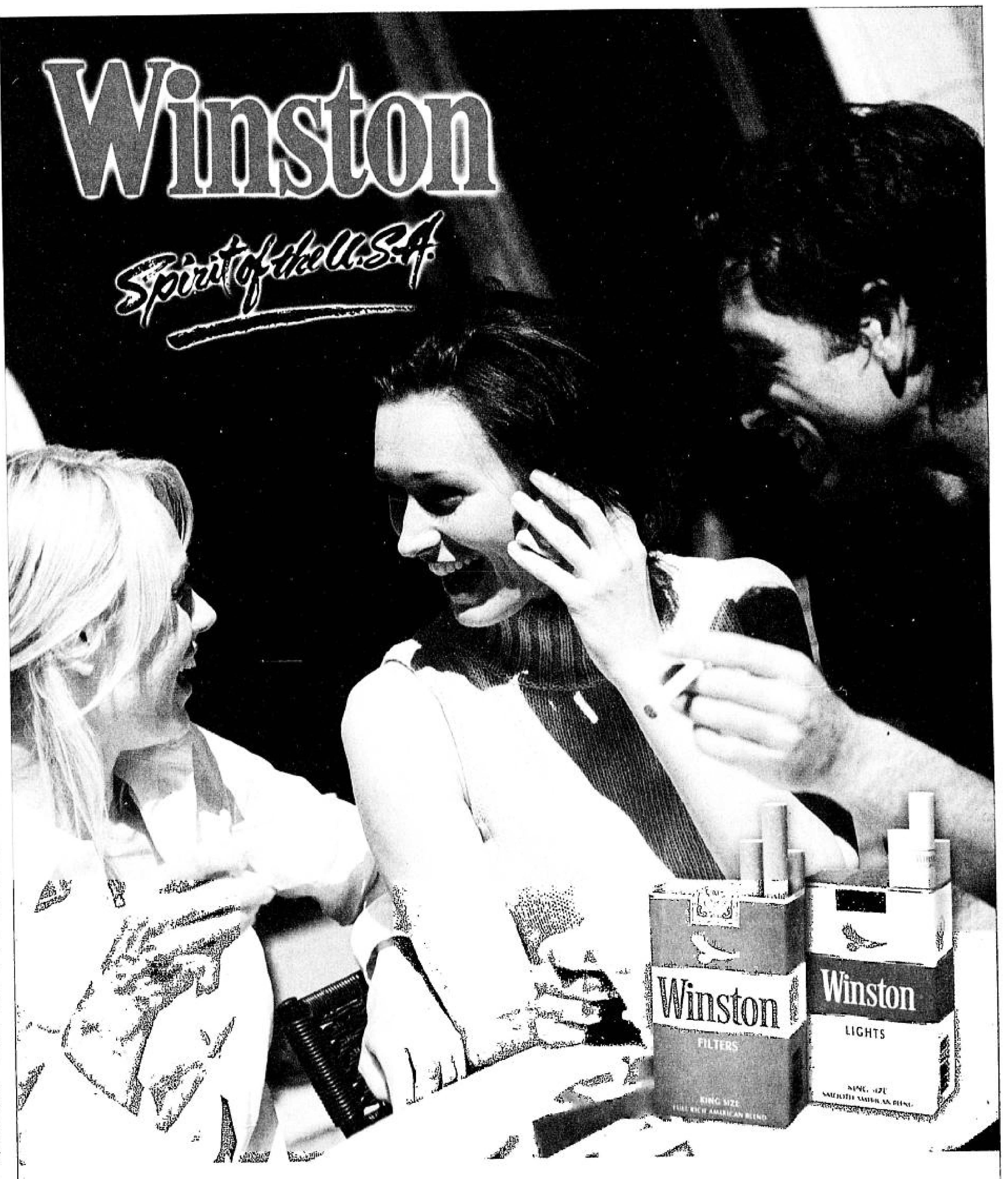
Governor Arnaiz himself heads the committees as chair, while Glynda Descuatan of the province's Sports and Cultural Facilities Management Board has been appointed co-chair.

Other committees and their respective chairpersons are: Technical Conduct Committee—Ernesto Ravello, Provincial Sports coordinator, and Jose Guirit, City Sports Development Officer, BAP-Negros Oriental; Accommodations—Dr. Profetiza Lim, Dep-Ed, Dumaguete City and Dr. Aleli Abne, Dep-Ed Negros Oriental; Promotions/Publications—Glynda Descuatan, Sky Cable, Dumaguete City; Finance—Danilo Mendez, Provincial Treasurer and Teodorico Reyes, Provincial Accountant; Transportation—George Villamor, Dep-Ed Dumaguete City and engineer Susano Ruperto, Provincial Engineer; Support Services—lawyer Ismael Martinez, Provincial General Services Officer; Local Tours—Myla Mae Abellana, OIC-Provincial Tourism Officer.

"The working committees are already in place and they are all excited to be a part of this worthy undertaking," said Arnaiz. "We are preparing for this at the earliest time possible to ensure that the tournament will run smoothly and without any hitches, if possible."

BAP secretary general Graham Lim said he is confident that the tournament will be a success because of Governor Arnaiz's hands-on supervision of the preparations.

The national finals will be held at different venues in the province, but the championships are scheduled to be played at the state-of-the-art Lamberto Matias Gym in Dumaguete City. Other venues are in Silliman University, Foundation University (both in Dumaguete), Zambongeita City, Tanjay City, Bais City, Bayawan City and Sta. Catalina.



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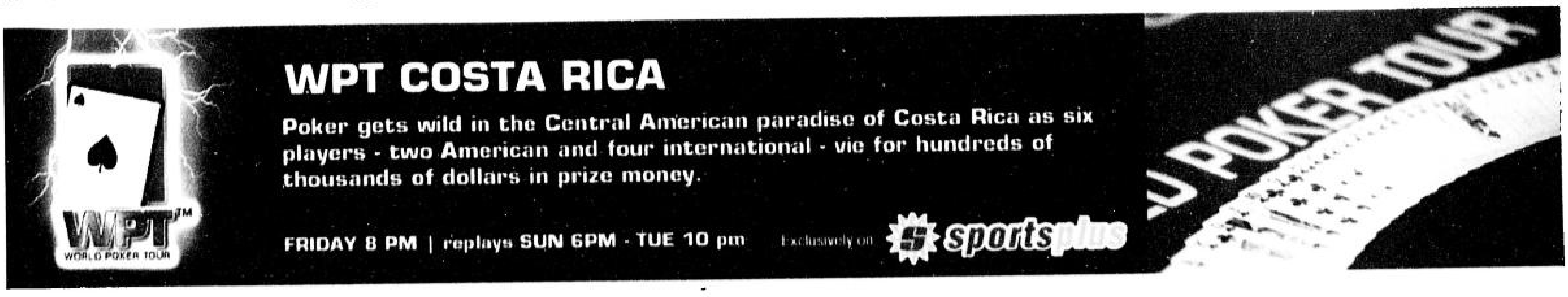

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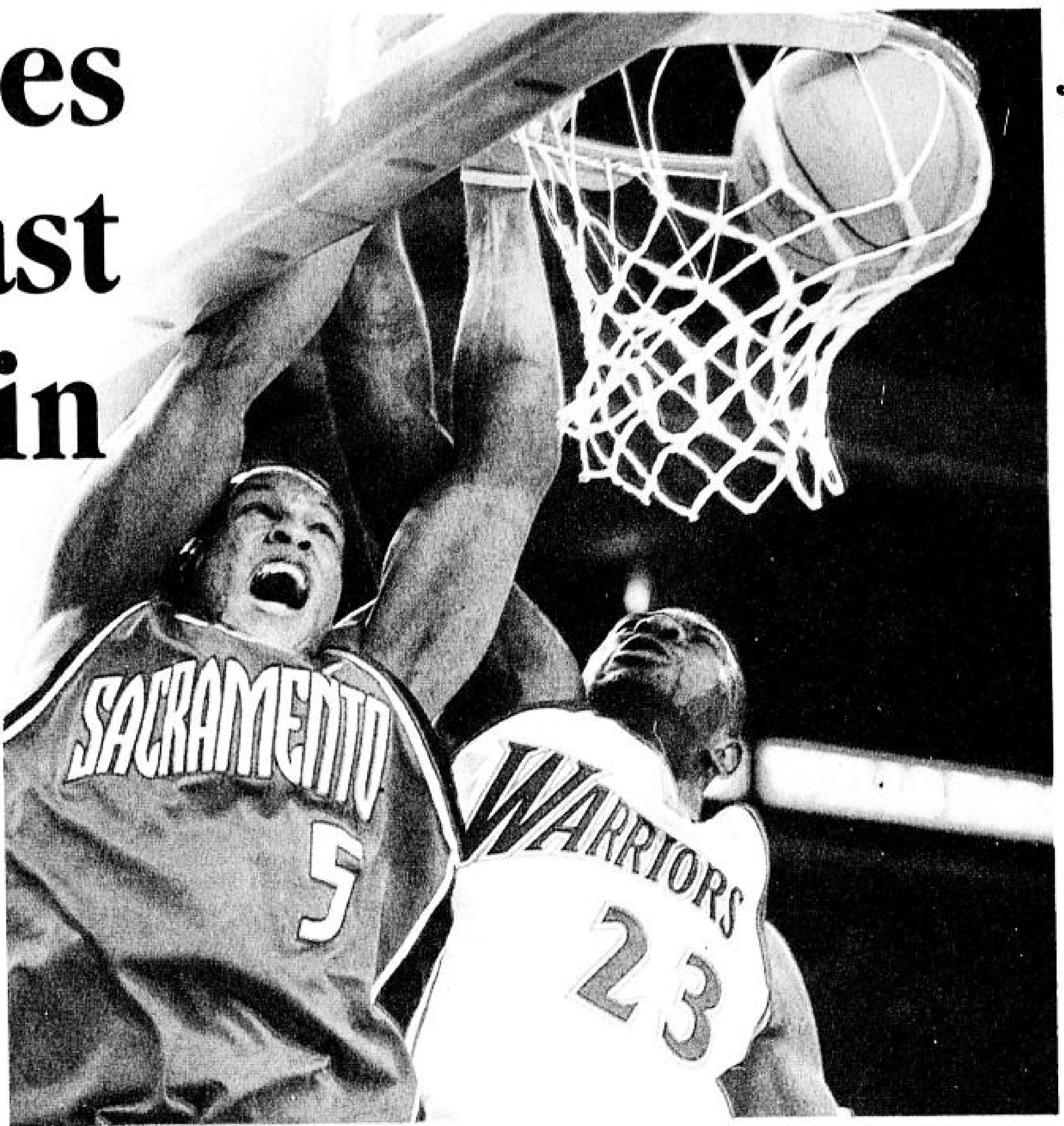
WPT WORLD POKER TOUR

McGrady sizzles as Rockets blast 76ers; Suns win



SACRAMENTO Kings' Evans (left) dunks over Golden State Warriors' Jason Richardson during their NBA Game yesterday in Oakland, California. AP

PHILADELPHIA—Tracy McGrady outperformed the NBA's leading scorer, and the Houston Rockets knocked the Philadelphia 76ers out of first place in the Atlantic Division with a 118-95 victory Wednesday.

McGrady made five 3-pointers and had 34 points and nine assists for the Rockets.

McGrady was a consistent threat on offense throughout each of the four quarters, while Allen Iverson—leading the NBA with an average of 29.0 points—had 15 of his 28 points in the first quarter. Iverson also had 10 assists.

"He's 6-8 and he can elevate over everyone and make incredible shots. Everyone needs someone like him," Houston coach Jeff Van Gundy said.

Juwan Howard added 14 points and 13 rebounds for the Rockets, Jon Barry made four 3-pointers and scored 12 points, and Yao Ming also scored 12.

"We have what we have," Sixers coach Jim O'Brien said. "There are some teams that are just flat-out better than we are. Tonight, these guys were just flat-out better than we were."

Combined with Boston's victory over New Jersey, the 76ers fell a half-game behind the Celtics in the division standings.

In Indianapolis, Chris Bosh had 25 points and 15 rebounds, and Jalen Rose hit two free throws with less than a second to go to lift Toronto over Indiana.

Indiana blew a 19-point lead in the third quarter en route to its sixth straight loss, its longest losing streak in two years.

Rose finished with 22 points, and Milt Palacio added 13 for the Raptors.

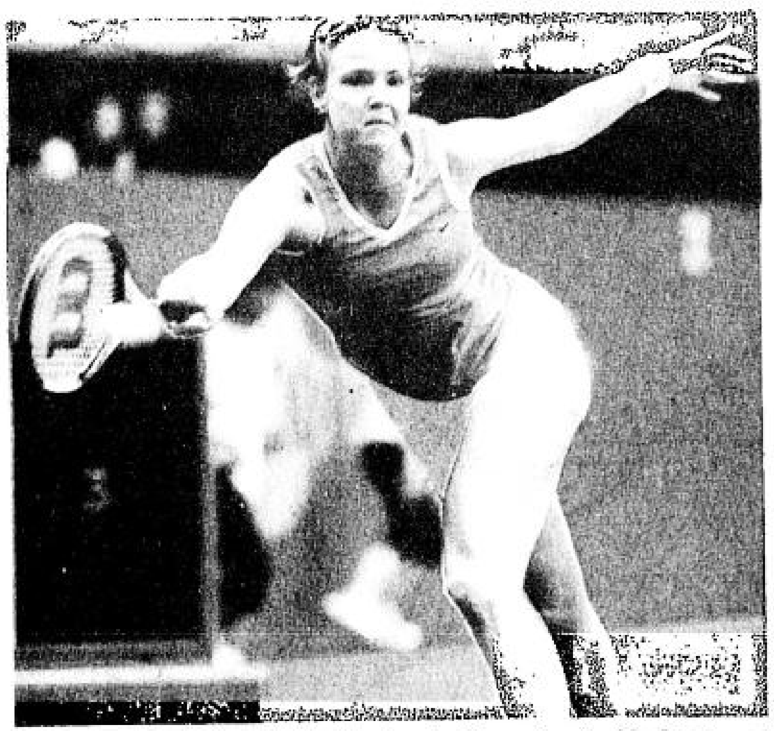
In Boston, Paul Pierce had 28 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for his fifth career triple-double, and Raef LaFrentz added 21 points and eight rebounds to lead Boston over New Jersey.

Pierce had 14 points and four assists in the third quarter to help the Celtics, 4-2 in their last six games, open up an 87-58 lead with 1:35 left in the quarter.

In Minneapolis, Amare Stoudemire scored 23 points to help Phoenix hand Minnesota its fourth-largest home loss in franchise history.

Shawn Marion had 19 points, Quentin Richardson added 17, and Steve Nash had 15 points and 11 assists for Phoenix, 5-1 on its six-game trip.

COMPLETE RESULTS: Boston 110, New Jersey 89; Houston 118, Philadelphia 95; Toronto 98, Indiana 97; Detroit 99, Atlanta 84; Dallas 90, New Orleans 82; Phoenix 108, Minnesota 79; Portland 97, Denver 94; Sacramento 111, Golden State 107 (ot).



DAVENPORT returns the ball during the Toray Pan Pacific Open. AP

Davenport, Dementieva reach q'finals

TOKYO—World number one Lindsay Davenport and Russia's Elena Dementieva advanced to the quarterfinals of the Pan Pacific Open tennis tournament with victories over Japanese opponents here Thursday.

American top seed Davenport, seeking a third straight and record fifth Tokyo title here, faced a tougher than expected challenge before beating Saori Obata, 6-4, 6-3, in 64 minutes.

It was Davenport's first outing since she was beaten by Serena Williams in last Saturday's Australian Open final in Melbourne.

Sydney Olympic silver medalist Dementieva, seeded four, shrugged off a shaky start that saw her hit four double faults to trail 0-2 before scoring a lopsided 6-2, 6-2 win in 63 minutes.

"I lost the first two games and then I won it 6-2, six games in a row. I usually have a slow start," said Dementieva, runner-up at Roland Garros and the US Open last season.

DEMENTIEVA shows Grand Slam experience. AFP

"But I was very comfortable on the court, because I knew that I just have to find my rhythm and I can win this match, so I think I played very well today, even though I lost my game from the beginning," she added.

Dementieva said the experience of reaching the finals in the Grand Slams last season had helped her beat better players, but said there was room for improvement.

"Especially my serve, but for the moment I know must continue to work hard and I feel like if I do, I can do it (winning a Grand Slam) this year," added the 23-year-old Russian.

Japan's number two Shinobu Asagoe kept local hopes alive when last year's US Open quarterfinalist whipped Roberta Vinci of Italy, 6-0, 6-2, for a place against Dementieva Friday.

"We have only a few tournaments in Japan and I'm really glad that I could reach the quarterfinals and draw people's attention on my home ground," said Asagoe, ranked 32nd against Vinci's 116.

"This is a big step forward to my next stage, but you should reduce her errors to move up further. I think I've improved enough to reduce errors and try to hit a winner." Russian sixth seed Elena Likhovtseva had a hard time beating former Japan Open champion Jill Craybas of the United States, 7-5, 4-6, 6-2, to book a place against Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova of Russia, second seed. *AFP*

Patriots have the clutch guys

JACKSONVILLE, Florida—With the game on the line, the New England Patriots hardly lack for clutch players—Tom Brady, Adam Vinatieri, Rodney Harrison.

With the game on the line, no one is sure if the Philadelphia Eagles have the kind of performers who could lift them past the defending champions in Sunday's Super Bowl.

Though Philly's track record before this year wasn't very promising—three straight NFC championship game flops—the Eagles insist past failures were erased when they finally won the conference title.

They'd better be correct, because the Patriots simply don't get stressed out, particularly in the Super Bowl, which they've won two of the last three seasons.

"We haven't been to the Super Bowl, but we're battle-tested," said All-Pro safety Brian Dawkins, the leader of a defense that includes one starter who has played in the big game—end Jevon Kearse with Tennessee in 2000. "We've been tested in championship games. We feel pressure year after year and we know how to win in those situations."

They hadn't won in crucial situations, though, until beating Atlanta to avoid becoming the first franchise to lose four straight NFC title games. The Patriots have won eight consecutive postseason games with Brady at quarterback and Bill Belichick as coach, and they are seven-point favorites over Philadelphia.

"I don't feel we're at a disadvantage," coach Andy Reid said. "They go in and think they are as good as anybody in the NFL, but they understand they have to prove it every Sunday."

Especially this Sunday, against a team on the verge of being considered a dynasty. Not only are there questions about how the Eagles might perform on such a stage, but there are no questions about how the Patriots will deal with it. They've already successfully displayed their steely nerves and skills under the burning spotlight—twice.

Which presents Philadelphia with yet another challenge: treating the Patriots with too much respect.

If that happens, they're beaten before they take the Alltel Stadium field, and Vinatieri won't need to match his two, last-second, Super Bowl-winning kicks. Nor will Brady have to stage any late heroics. Matters will be decided much earlier.

McNabb, echoing Reid's statement, basically told Philly fans not to worry.

"It's a slap in the face" to hear such criticism, the Pro Bowl quarterback said. "But they are the champions. And we have made it; we are here in the Super Bowl. No one can take that away from us.

"Can we win this game? How can you ask anybody that?"

No one is asking the Patriots that. If they play true to their history, not only will they match Vince Lombardi's Green Bay Packers as the only team to win nine straight postseason games, but they will do it dramatically.

Brady will complete critical passes to Troy Brown or David Patten. Harrison will rattle a receiver and force a key drop. Tedy Bruschi will create a turnover. Richard Seymour will get a crucial sack.

We've seen it before. Most everyone outside of Philly expects to see it again Sunday.

"The important thing going into these games, and what I've learned, is you need to be well-prepared," Brady said. "When you're prepared, you're confident going into a game, you're calm. You have the answers to the test." AP

LONARD hits a bunker shot in the first round. AFP

Lonard shares lead at Royal Melbourne

MELBOURNE, Australia—Trevor Immelman replaced a more familiar South African at the top of the early first-round leaderboard Thursday at the Heineken Classic, shooting a 6-under-par 65 along with England's Steve Webster and Australian Peter Lonard at Royal Melbourne.

Ernie Els, trying to the win the tournament for the fourth year in a row, had a frustrating 1-over 72, 12 strokes worse than the opening 60 he had last year when he flirted with a 59.

Els had three birdies and four bogeys Thursday, including back-to-back bogeys at the sixth and seventh holes after playing the back nine first.

"It was just one of those days," said Els. "I never got going."

More than 120 millimeters—nearly five inches—of rain hit the course on Wednesday and early Thursday, forcing a 2 1/2 hour delay to the start. High winds also uprooted trees near the club, but caused no damage to the greens or fairways on the composite course used for the 1998 Presidents Cup.

Camilo Villegas of Colombia was a shot behind the leading trio with a 66 and tied for fourth place with Australian Brad Lamb.

Greg Norman, Colin Montgomerie and Stuart Appleby were among the late starters at 3 p.m. (0400 GMT). It was unlikely that all 155 starters would complete their rounds Thursday.

Immelman, playing the back nine first, made the turn in 6-under 29, including four straight birdies from 15 to 18. He was headed for a 63 until a double-bogey on the par-3 eighth, needing two shots to get out the bunker after his ball became plugged AP

Bye, bye Chicago: Sosa joins Orioles

BALTIMORE—Tapping his heart and thrusting both thumbs upward, Sammy Sosa stepped to the podium and flashed the broad smile that Chicago Cubs fans know too well.

Sosa loved his 13 years with the Cubs, yet he happily put all that behind him Wednesday upon joining the Baltimore Orioles.

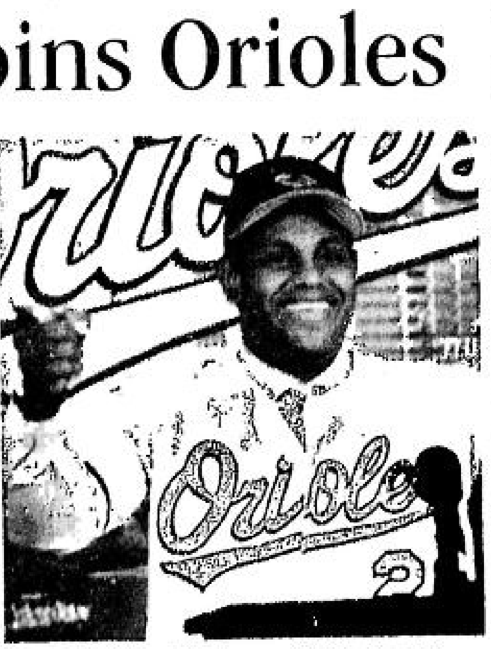
"I gave Chicago everything that I have. It was a beautiful experience for my wife and family," he said. "I had a great time in Chicago, but you have to move on. This is my new house, and I love it."

Sosa joined the Orioles after commissioner Bud Selig approved the deal and the slugger passed his physical. Chicago received second baseman Jerry Hairston Jr. and two minor leaguers, second baseman Mike Fontenot and right-handed pitcher Dave Crouthers.

Sosa was peppered with questions about his final days with the team and his shaky relationship with Cubs manager Dusty Baker. Sosa insisted that, while he will take nothing but fond memories from his days with the Cubs, it was time to start anew.

"My legacy is there, but I haven't finished yet. The best of Sammy Sosa is coming now," he said. "I wanted to finish my career there, but it didn't happen. I'm here now in Baltimore and I'm going to win the crowd."

Under terms of the addendum to Sosa's contract that he signed Wednesday, the Cubs will pay $16.15 million (euro12.37 million) of the $25 million (euro19 million) Sosa was still owed under his $72 million (euro55 million), four-year agreement, according to details obtained by The Associated Press. AP



SOSA dons the Baltimore Orioles jersey after the contract signing. AP

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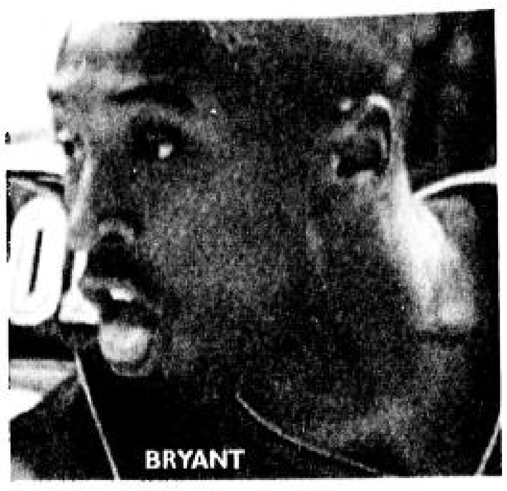
udge chastises lawyers in Bryant case


BRYANT

IVER—A US federal judge chastised rneys in the civil case against NBA star c Bryant on Wednesday and said they ıld no longer be allowed to put "imma- ıl, impertinent and scandalous infor- ion" in public filings as a summer trial ns.

S District Judge Richard Matsch said vas tired of having details put before public that should be confidential.

The court is not involved in the enter- ment business," said Matsch, the nononsense judge who handled the federal Oklahoma City bombing trials. "It is to be expected that everything that is done here is done consistently with the rules and with a sense of decorum and decency."

Matsch said a number of court filings will be sealed. The material at issue is expected to include depositions, requests between attorneys, and potential questions that will delve into the lives and sexual history of Bryant and the woman.

Some documents, already filed publicly, will now be sealed; the order will also cover material filed in the future.

The woman sued the Los Angeles Lakers star in August, three weeks before the criminal case against him collapsed in Colorado. The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages for mental injuries, humiliation and public scorn the woman said she has suffered since their encounter at an upscale hotel near Vail in June 2003.

Bryant, a married father of one, issued an apology but maintained the sex was consensual.

He did not attend the hearing, but his 20-year-old accuser was present.

One of the woman's attorneys, L. Lin Wood, said outside court that he agreed with Matsch.

"Too much has been filed that had no business being filed. The court system should not be a public relations machine," he said. Defense attorneys did not comment. *AP*

'omjanovich resigns as Lakers nentor, cites health problems

TOMJANOVICH

SEGUNDO, Califor- —Rudy Tomjanovich re- ied as coach of the Los eles Lakers on Wednes- citing health concerns ught on by the job.

There are no outside influ- es, be it pressure from ve, anything to do with my ers or being here in Los eles," he said. "This is all ut me and how I'm wired. Nobody put sure on me but me."

omjanovich, 56, went 22-19 in his first season as Phil Jackson's successor and with a revamped lineup built around Kobe Bryant. Assistant coach Frank Hamblen led the Lakers to a 2-0 record when Tomjanovich missed their last two games because of a stomach virus and a sinus infection.

Tomjanovich, who led the Houston Rockets to NBA titles in 1994 and 1995, returned to coaching after recovering from bladder cancer.

He said that he began wearing down mentally and physically about a month ago.

"I went from this energetic, pumped-up guy to being sapped of a lot of energy," Tomjanovich said, adding that he takes antibiotics regularly now. "It just seems like I got deeper into not feeling good. Why this happened now and why my body couldn't take it, I do not have the answer."

Tomjanovich said the Lakers offered him a consulting position for two years. *AP*

'helps named SportsMan of the Year

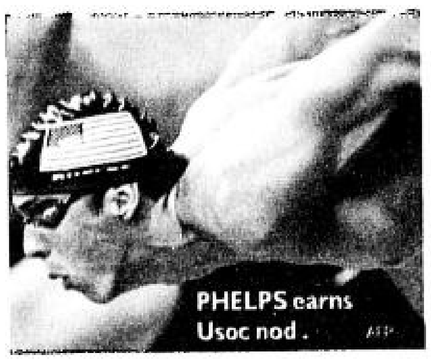
ORADO SPRINGS, Colorado— ɪael Phelps was selected the US npic Committee's SportsMan of the on Wednesday, and Carly Patterson the women's award.

helps won eight medals at the npics in Athens—six golds and two ızes—becoming the first American to mplish the feat and matching the ɪrd for most medals won at a single npics.

am extremely honored to win this award," Phelps said. "You look at all the great athletes that could have won, and I'm definitely in a line with some of the greatest athletes in the world."

Patterson, the first US woman to win the Olympic all-around gymnastics title since Mary Lou Retton, was chosen as SportsWoman of the Year.

The US women's softball squad was named team of the year after outscoring its opponents a whopping 51-1 on the way to its third straight gold medal. *AP*


PHELPS earns Usoc nod . AP

a Salle, UST trip semis rivals

LA Salle smothered hapless Letran, 20, 25-17, 25-16, yesterday to inch er to a repeat finals appearance in the key's V-League second conference at Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

Watched by a huge crowd, the Lady ɪers won despite the determined d of the Lady Knights.

he Taft-based spikers thrashed the Murallans to seize a 1-0 lead in their best-of-three semifinal duel in this Shakey's Pizza-backed tournament.

Defending champion University of Santo Tomas beat Philippine Sports Commission, 25-21, 23-25, 24-26, 25-16, 15-10, for a 1-0 advantage in the other semifinal encounter.

It was the third straight time that UST and PSC fought to a thriller of a five-setter with the Tigresses winning all of them.

PSC coach Ramon Suzara, who had earlier said that his Legends had better chances over UST than La Salle, actually appeared to be right on target when the guest squad fought back from a set down to win the next two.

Congratulations to the DECEMBER winners of

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WINNERS of PALakbayan Tours

GMA	LUZON	VISMIN
Marissa Nablo #370162	Sofia Chang #375916	Paulo Koksen #396662

WINNERS of Prepaid Phonekits

GMA		LUZON		VISMIN	
Amabelle Gallo	#479071	Leonardo Cendaña	#329702	Fiel Leah Solis	#396263
Leilani Jualchon	#137194	Katrina Caluag	#432086	Francisco Nitafan	#346729
Resty Rodriguez	#317489	Erasto Evangelista	#331065	Diodora Amanlia	#389885
Ma. Lyndie Sarmiento	#130204	Divina Dabu	#427727	Junel Dongor	#105424
Imelda Piega	#436864	Roderick Nidoy	#298985	Gigi Pulvera	#102185

WINNERS of Tabletop Dispensers w/ 5-gallon container

GMA

Mancel Babon	#367764
Florentino Sajol	#479141
Juan Felizario	#455710
Jovita Co	#457101
Owen Abueg	#466020
Cynthia Garma	#383847
Jose Jophele Baguel	#309328
Arnel Gonzaga	#360822
Jorge Paterno	#141168
Nida Camat	#398318
Alfredo Franco Jr.	#118794
Ma. Fe Barrera	#380376
Jose Roa Jr.	#370471
Niña Bongon	#328646
Francisco Barrientos	#358772
Alice Huang	#369564
Zeta Taybo	#399505
Evangeline Tay	#454124
Wilfredo Zabala	#360204
Dante Almanzor	#443722

LUZON

Divina Gracia Galang	#419596
Virginia Valdes	#186918
Ponciano Parungao	#311094
Adora Ocampo	#160288
Ryan Ollas	#287407
Chona Aquino	#398535
Alberto Toledo	#296627
Mildred Manansala	#385736
Airis Abellana	#397097
Ferdinand Egipto	#183477

VISMIN

Donald Culanag	#348110
Demetrio Paguta	#348231
Sharon Pel Casamayor	#348267
Jinik Mancao	#389298
James Uy	#106893
Rosalina Gonzales	#434687
Eric Sigo	#434004
Lily Viray	#107255
Elizabeth Celada	#433633
William Lao Tan	#100933

Congratulations to all the winners!
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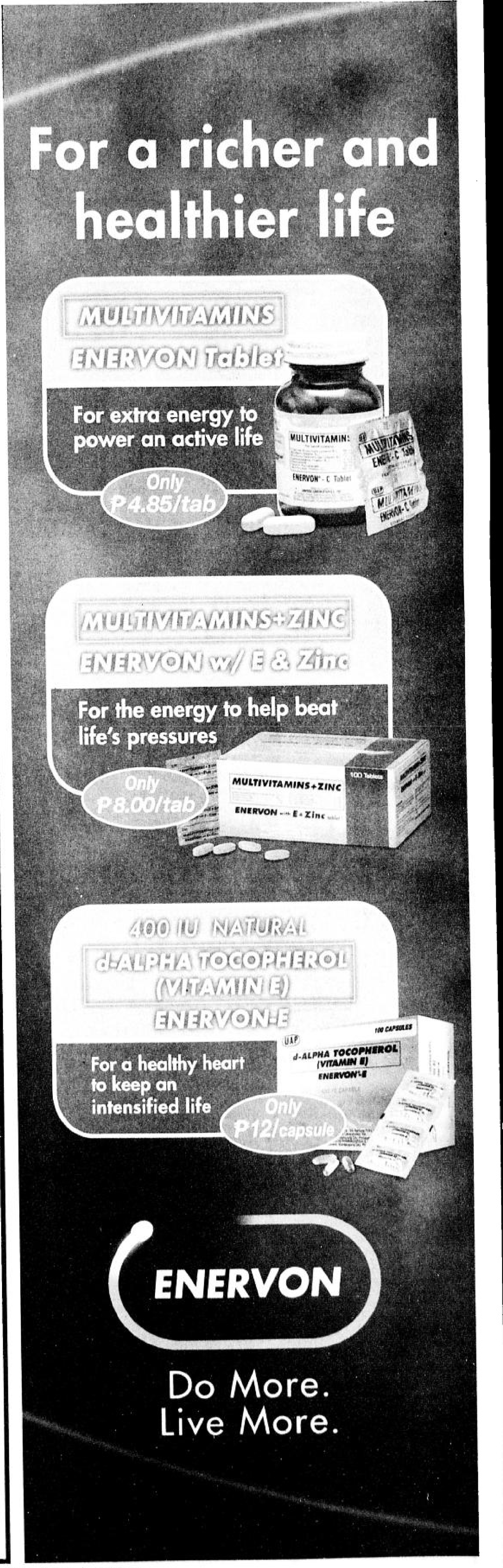

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Team Pacquiao disintegrating as Morales fight nears

SIGNING up with a new manager will definitely not be as simple and harmless as a change in wardrobe for Manny Pacquiao, who's slated to fight Mexican ring icon Erik Morales on March 19.

For one, a change in management could automatically lead to the disintegration of the original Pinoy team that saw Pacquiao through his glory days in the United States.

In fact, that "scorching showdown" slated at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas could also be Pacquiao's last under HBO.

Reason: Shelley Finkel, Pacquiao's new manager, is strongly identified with Showtime, a known HBO ring rival.

"It's not that simple," said broadcaster Ronnie Nathanielsz, who feared Pacquiao's preparations for Morales could be fraught with problems.

For one, Pacquiao has reportedly moved out of the Vagabond Inn in Hollywood, located immediately after the Wild Card Boxing Club of trainer Freddie Roach in Hollywood.

Nathanielsz said a new fellow recommended by Roach has been assigned to look after Pacquiao, thereby reducing the involvement of Filipino trainer Buboy Fernandez with the celebrated southpaw from GenSan.

Nathanielsz said that, officially, business manager Rod Nazario and promoter Murad Muhammad have live contracts with Pacquiao.

"But it will be entirely different now, members of Team Pacquiao like Moy Lainez, Lito Mondejar and Gerry Garcia, who used to back up Manny, will no longer be included in the entourage," Nathanielsz said.

Not only that. There were also unconfirmed reports Pacquiao was seeking legal action after he reportedly got excluded from the pay-per-view deal for his scheduled showdown against Morales.

Pacquiao had been emphatic about his perceived rights to the net pay-per-view proceeds from his clash with Morales.

He told the INQUIRER last month inside his room at the Vagabond Inn that, normally, he and Morales should be entitled to 40 percent each of the net ppv earnings.

Nathanielsz however surmised that the main factor that could've swayed Pacquiao into signing up with the American group, which dangled a $300,000 bonus, was the promise of a green card for the RP boxing idol.

"The bottom line here is that Pacquiao wants his whole family, his in-laws included, to be able to settle down in the United States," Nathanielsz said. *Recah Trinidad*

SPORTSWATCH

NPC President's Cup to benefit kids

DESERVING children of low-salaried newsmen will be the main beneficiaries of the first National Press Club (NPC) President's Cup golf tournament unfolding Feb. 10 with a banner field expected to see action at Club Intramuros. Organizers of the event, held to raise funds for the various NPC projects, said they would soon announce the criteria for the scholarship program for the kids who would merit financial aid from the country's biggest media organization. Meantime, MIAA general manager Alfonso Cusi, Pagcor and Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office joined the growing list of major sponsors of the event that includes Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp. (HSBC), Smart, GSIS and Manila North Tollways Corp. On hand as hole sponsors are Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr., Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte, the Philippine Sports Commission, C-Lium Fibre, Ford Motors Corp., G2K Corp., Isuzu Philippines Corp., Air21, Department of Agriculture, Department of National Defense, Sta. Lucia Realty and Dev't. Inc., Globe Telecom, and Cebu Pacific Air. Unilever Phils., Coca-Cola and San Miguel Corp. led supporters of the fund-raising event. First Gentleman Mike Arroyo will head the guest list during the ceremonial tee-off. The event is held to foster goodwill and camaraderie among golfing journalists and friends from both government and the private sector.

Table tennis national pool selection

FIVE men and five women made it to the national pool of table tennis after a qualifying tournament held recently at the Makati Coliseum. Those who made it to the Men's team are Julius Esposo (1st place), Hua Ching PNP; Angelo Marcelino (2nd place) Phil. Army; Harold Baring (3rd place) UST, Rodel Valle (4th place) and the 5th slot went to Isaias Seronio of LQPTTA. In the distaff side, Sendrina Balatbat from College of St. Benilde (CSB) bagged first place, followed by Ayra Malabayabas from Tatap; 3rd went to Beverly Villar (Tatap), Louise Clemente (FEU) 4th place and Katherne Vinas of Batangas City (5th). Victor Valbuena, Tatap president, is developing a solid training program for the National Team preparing for the 23rd SEA Games slated in the country starting November. These players will undergo training and monthly rankings from Feb. 16 to Sept. 17. Only five men and five women shall compose the national team. They will be sent to China for two months of training, just in time for them to compete in the SEA Games.

Super Bowl at National Sports Grill

SPORTS Plus and National Sports Grill team up to bring you the most anticipated championship game in pro sports, the Super Bowl XXXIX on Feb. 7, 7 a.m. This year's match-up pits the New England Patriots against the Philadelphia Eagles at the Alltel Stadium in Jacksonville, Florida. In line with the viewing party, NSG will be serving breakfast buffet from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. at P250. To jack up the fun and intensity, sports fans get the chance to bring home cool and exciting prizes and NFL merchandise. Feel every pass, tackle and touchdown with NSG's 32 television sets including a 3-sided 84-inch Jumbotron. NSG is at the third floor of Greenbelt 1, Ayala Center, Makati City. For details, call 7525431, e-mail info@nsg.ph or log on to www.nsg.ph.

4-cock derby at Pasay City Cockpit

POPULAR cockers and breeders are again seeing action today at the fully air-conditioned Pasay City Cockpit as the "Pasay Cockpit Cockers Association (PCCA) 4-Cock Derby" gets underway at 6 p.m. Sponsors are Sagupaan Complexor 3000, Sagupaan B-50 Forten and Sagupaan Mite Free. Among the favored entries in the 61 fights slated are Greenwood of newspaper publisher Jake Macasaet, winning time Jobo of Rudy Salud and Lito Orillaza, Banahaw of Benjie Lim, JM Intruder of Jun Marasigan, Master of the Ring of Madison Go, JV Scaramouche of Jun Villar and Gene Avendano, Spartan's Blood of Rey Briones, Union JNL Gamefarm I of Jack Ching, Clearcut RM of Ramon Mancenares/Madlambayan Brothers, and Moon Farm of Jimmy Atayde. Meanwhile, pit managers Oscar Gonzales, Eric dela Rosa and Butchoy Olano announced that the four-day schedule of "Fastest Kill Challenge One-Cock Ulutan" will start on Sunday until Wednesday (Feb. 6 to Feb. 9). For inquiries, call 8431890, 8431746 and 8166750.

Barakos graced PBA mall tour

THE RED Bull Barakos visited Ever Commonwealth yesterday in the second leg of a three-stage mall tour dubbed the PBA Timeout@Ever Malls. Enrico Villanueva, Jimwell Torion, Lordy Tugade and veteran Nelson Asaytono led the Red Bull players who met the fans in a fun-filled afternoon. The PBA-Ever mall tour, an interactive activity that features touring displays such as hand and shoe prints, photo gallery, a giant inflatable basketball hoop, a jersey and PBA merchandise booths, had a successful launch last Jan. 15 at Ever Grand Central. The San Miguel Beermen will grace the event, organized by the PBA Properties Inc. and backed by Gillette, FedEx, Air21, Mall and More, Hanford, Accel and JVC, on Feb. 5.

AT SANTA ANA
BY MR. 999

Race 1—1. Hakuna Matata 2. Run Like D Wind
Race 2—1. Noble Red 2. Golden Africa 3. Cable Car 4. Top Dancer 5. Reign of Fire
Race 3—1. Moab/High Octane 2. Chariot of Fire 3. Hellfire 4. Aya's Dream
Race 4—1. Western Dancer 2. Ground Wave 3. Open Sky 4. Archer
Race 5—1. Cat's Jewel 2. Thywillbedone 3. Queen Banana 4. Tres Jeune
Race 6—1. Amazing Firenze 2. Sakura Ijhay 3. Parrot Moe 4. Mr. Bullseye 5. Time Deposit
Race 7—1. Deity 2. Seeing Red 3. Hello Africa 4. God is Good
Race 8—1. Magic Dancer 2. Great Tower 3. Flying Strike 4. Boogie Shoes 5. Ginja
Race 9—1. Fancy Dancer 2. Super Dancer 3. Rivaldo 4. Air Surprise 5. He's Splendid 6. Dennis D Menace

US group acquires Pacquiao

By Salven L. Lagumbay, *Contributor*

REIGNING Ring Magazine featherweight king Manny Pacquiao has found a new manager in American Shelly Finkel.

Last Jan. 31, Pacquiao became a free agent following the expiration of his five-year contract with Elorde, son of the great Flash Elorde.

"Yes, I have been informed already. OK *lang*," Elorde, considered as one of the nicest boxing managers in the country, said yesterday.

Finkel, who heads the Shelly Finkel Management firm, is best known as the de facto manager and promoter of Mike Tyson, aside from being the representative of WBC heavyweight king Vitali Klitschko and his brother, ex-WBO heavyweight champ Vladimir Klitschko.

He is described by well-respected American boxing historian Thomas Hauser as a "survivor in the jungle that is professional boxing."

His role as a manager and advisor to Mike Tyson, Eyander Holyfield, Pernell Whitaker, Mark Breland, and Meldrick Taylor as well as the best of America's 1984 Olympic boxing team is considered the cornerstone of Finkel's career.

Popular boxing website Boxingtalk, which first reported the news of Pacquiao's having inked the deal with Finkel, reported that the New York-based manager Finkel called up to inform its publisher, Greg Leon, of the latest news, which was confirmed by members of Team Pacquiao later.

"Finkel is one of the most knowledgeable people in the world with regard to the business of boxing. He has the ability to relate to television executives, promoters, the media, and fighters. He also stirs passions (both pro and con) in the manner of Bill Clinton and George Bush," Hauser wrote.

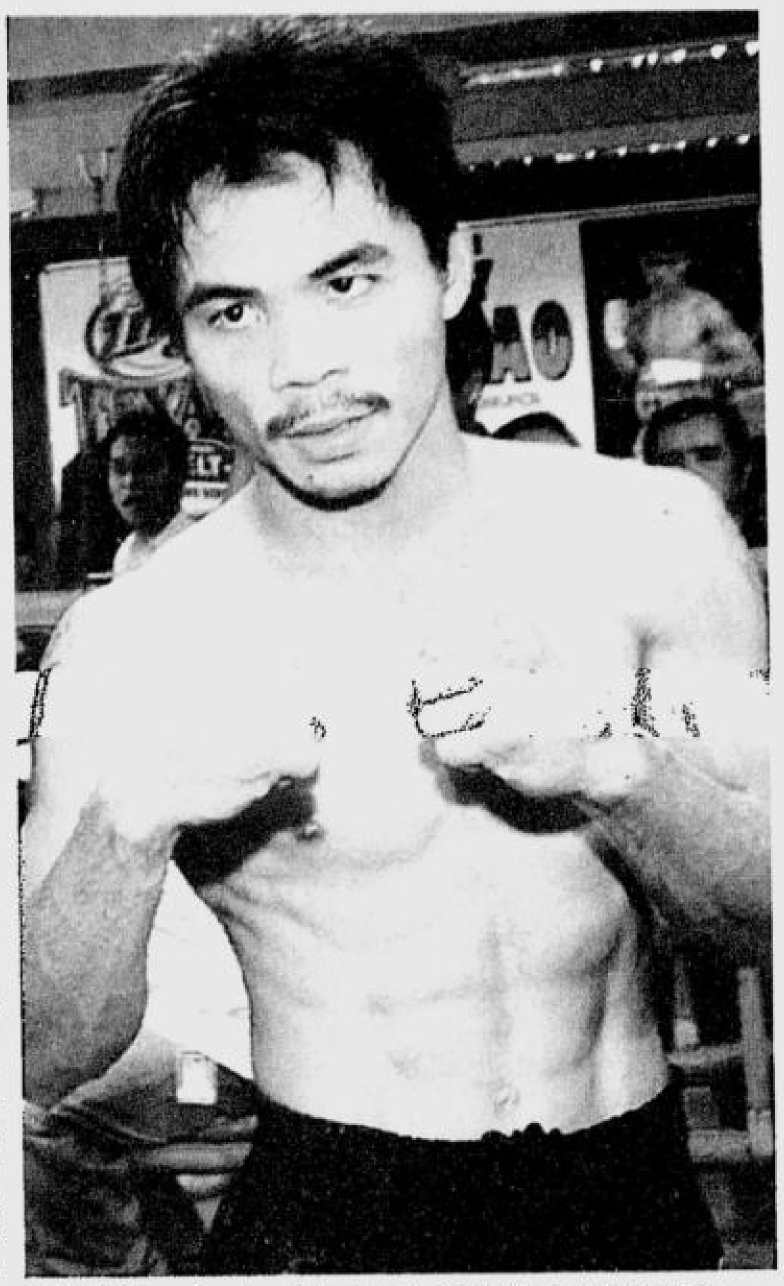
"Finkel's supporters say that he's trustworthy, tenacious, and tough. They point to his quiet personality and ability to get most jobs done. Everyone agrees that Finkel is a tireless worker, persistent, and very smart," Hauser added.

However, Finkel also has his share of detractors who refer to him as hypocritical and shameless. They have labeled him as the originator of "Shelly speak" ["carefully phrased truths that leave a misimpression"] and "90-Percent Finkel" ["Shelly tells you 90 percent of the truth, but not the last ten percent, which is what you need to know"].

Reportedly, Don King has labeled Finkel "Bob Arum in sheep's clothing."

Considering King's abhorrence for his rival promoter, it's impossible that the statement was made as a compliment.

King obviously has no love lost for Arum.



MANNY Pacquiao, deep in training in California, may have to do away with Filipino corner support in his next fight. PDI PHOTO

Torre, Paragua head RP team to Asian tilt

ASIA'S First Grandmaster Eugene Torre and GM-candidate Mark Paragua will lead the cast of Team Philippines competing in the Asian Continental Individual Chess Championships from March 21-31 at the Hotel Riviera Suites in Kerala, Cochi, India.

"I really prepared for the Asian Continental Chess Championships because this is an elimination for the Fide knockout cycle World Championships," said Torre, who has manned the top board for Team Philippines in the last 18 Chess Olympiads.

Torre, now 53, distinguished himself by reaching the candidates stage of the 1984 world championship, yielding to Hungarian GM Zoltan Ribli in their 1983 quarterfinals duel. GM Torre also topped the 1982 Inter-Zonal elims in Toluca, Mexico.

Originally scheduled Jan. 13-23, the tournament was reset in view of the tsunami disaster that wreaked havoc along some coastal regions of Asia, including Cochi.

The other RP bets are GM Nelson Mariano II, reigning Asian 3.2a zonal champion GM-candidate Ronald Dableo, GM-candidate Jayson Gonzales, GM-candidate Ronald "Onat" Bancod, 2004 national champion IM-candidate Darwin Laylo and IM Chito Garma.

The Fide 11-round Swiss system tournament offers 13 slots for the World Chess Championships where Torre and Paragua are hoping to earn return tickets.

Torre and Paragua narrowly missed qualifying in the last edition of the Asian Continental held in Doha, Qatar, dropping their final-round assignments. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

UE fencers target Ateneo rivals for overall title

DEFENDING champion University of the East is expected to exert extra effort to foil crowd favorite Ateneo's bid for the overall title in the final leg of the 4th Escrima Liga national inter-school championships set Feb. 5-6 at the PSC Fencing Center at Philsports (formerly Ultra) complex in Pasig City.

Ateneo dominated the initial leg of this outreach program organized by Team Ventures Inc. and sponsored by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Celeteque and 105.1 Crossover in cooperation with the Philippine Amateur Fencers Association and the Philippine Sports Commission.

According to national training coach, Team Ventures managing partner and Escrima Liga tournament director Marilee Estamapador, more than 200 student fencers from 11 schools are expected to cross blades in the pre-UAAP competition.

Last year's male fencer of the year, Joel Landicho, who sparked the Warriors' men's foil team to a gold finish in the first leg is expected to lead UE's bid to stop the Hail Mary fencers from taking the Escrima Liga overall crown.

The Lady Blue Eagles have to keep their dominance in the distaff side to likewise prevent UE from winning the title for a record three straight years.

For more details regarding the tourney, contact Team Ventures at 5225953 and 400-9745.

Business as usual in the PBA?

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

EMBATTLED Talk 'N Text did not field marquee player Asi Taulava against Barangay Ginebra in Game 2 of the PBA Philippine Cup Finals last Wednesday night at the Big Dome. No great mystery here.

In my opinion, that is the best solution to the messy legal problem between TNT and the Philippine Basketball Association.

"In the interest of the league and the public, the Talk 'N Text management has decided to continue with the championship games despite the unreasonable decision of the PBA commissioner," said TNT representative Ricky Vargas.

PBA Commissioner Noli Eala has ordered Game 1 forfeited in favor of Ginebra after TNT fielded Taulava in the Finals opener on Sunday even though the Fil-Tongan has been declared ineligible to play by the PBA.

In his decision, Eala invoked a rule of the league stating that any team which utilizes a player not eligible in accordance with PBA regulations and regardless of the actual final score is bound to lose such game to the opposing team.

As a former sports organizer myself, I say Eala is right. This legal imbroglio between TNT and Ginebra reminds me of a court case way back in 1983 when the Philippine Soap Box Derby which I headed as its president and derby director faced a damage suit because I disqualified a participant for violation of a tournament rule. The case was decided by the Supreme Court in my favor.

In his story, Dennis Eroa wrote: "In a landmark decision which will have a far-reaching effect in the country's sports scene, the Supreme Court's First Division gave sports organizers the right to enforce the rules without fear of being drawn into a long and costly court battle."

The principal issue in the suit filed by the participant was whether a court may substitute its judgment for decisions rendered by officials in a sports competition regarding rules violations. And based on this Supreme Court decision, it is very clear that the Supreme Court abhors the intrusion of the courts at sports disputes.

That's why I think Eala will no longer be spending sleepless nights pondering the problem in his domain with TNT's latest action.

But at the moment, many say Eala isn't too popular as the PBA commissioner. Most basketball fans will remember him more for his failures than for his successes because of the many bad things which had happened since he replaced Jun Bernardino in 2003. Since then, the PBA has been in turmoil.

The problem worsened last Sunday when TNT, armed with a favorable Quezon City Regional Trial Court ruling, fielded Taulava, who is under suspension by the PBA, in the opener of the Philippine Cup best-of-seven series which the Phone Pals won, 89-71.

The PBA had suspended Taulava (and five other Fil-foreign players) as a fake Filipino based on a Department of Justice ruling last year.

However, Taulava fought the suspension order in a QC Regional Trial Court which allowed him to play in the PBA again.

But Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said the decision of the QC Regional Trial Court is "questionable" and mocks the authority of the Department of Justice which had found Taulava to have faked his Filipino citizenship. "This department questions the undue interference by the courts in the cases of these so-called 'Fil-shams."

Pampanga Rep. Francis Nepomuceno also called the TNT action as a travesty of justice. "Although the QC Regional Trial Court decided in favor of Taulava, the PBA has a legal right to file a motion for reconsideration—which it did—because the decision of the RTC is not yet final and executory," said Nepomuceno, a member of the House committee on games and amusement.

Basketball patron and BAP adviser Go Teng Kok, who is also president of both chess and athletics, said Taulava's problem should have been resolved at the office of the PBA commissioner and not before the sala of a judge. He added that because the PBA has its own constitution and by-laws, a commissioner and a board of governors, which includes a representative from TNT, it is best for the courts to prudently leave things where they are in the enforcement of its house rules.

"Leave sports alone," he said.

Philippine Cup: Television blockbuster

THE PHILIPPINE Basketball Association is once again a television blockbuster.

Numbers churned out recently by the semifinal series between Ginebra and San Miguel showed that the PBA Gran Matador Philippine Cup could be the most watched tournament in years.

Already, the gate has been a welcome surprise, with 17,475 fans trooping to watch the monumental Game 5 clash won by the Kings over the Beermen.

Several stars have also lined up for tickets to watch the games live. Aga Muhlach and Charlene Gonzales watched on consecutive playing days, cheering for eventual finalist Ginebra.

Albert Martinez, Borgy Manotoc, Kris Aquino, Boy Abunda, LJ Moreno and Juliana Palermo also came to watch the games.

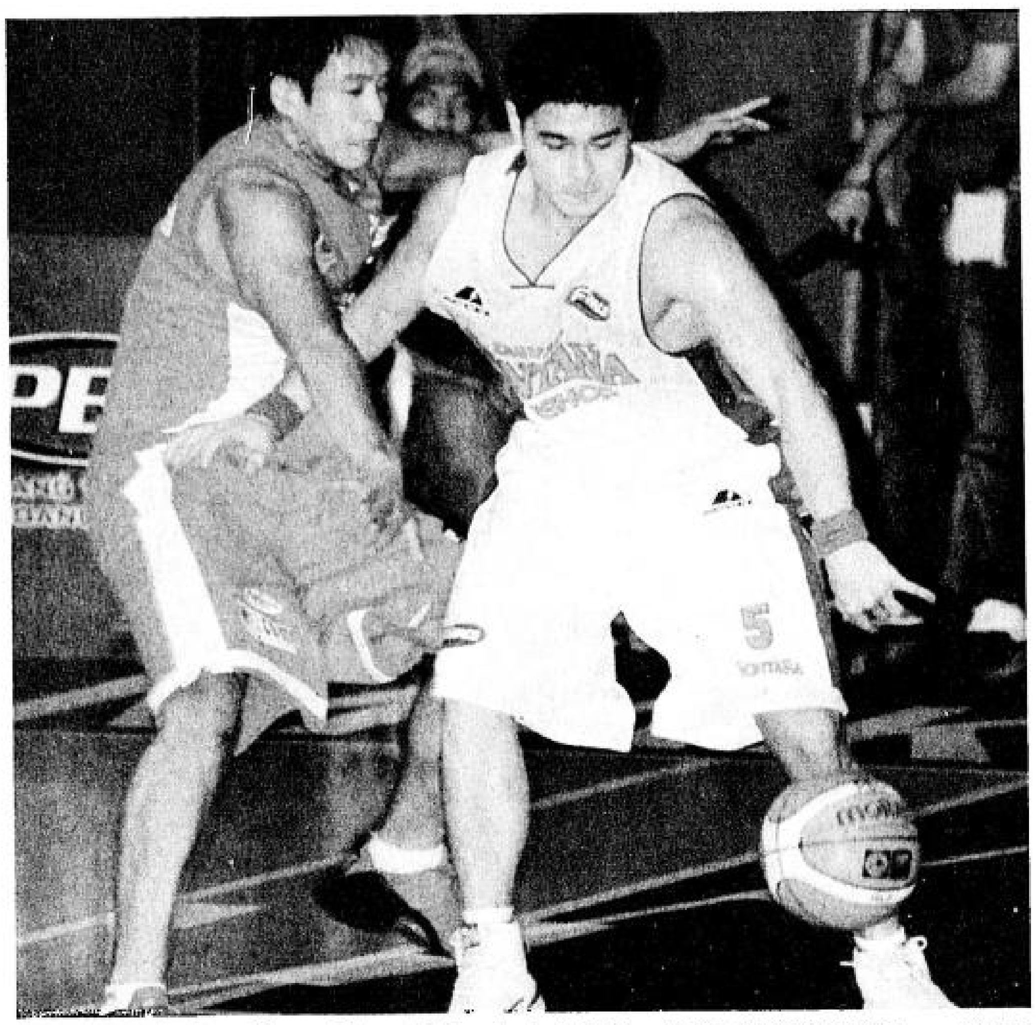
On television, the numbers are even more impressive. The PBA has suddenly made ABC-5 a force in the network industry.

Ratings have been consistently in the double-digit mark, with no playdate registering less than 11 percent. The ratings refer to how many of the people watching television tuned in to the games.

The audience share was pegged at 17.4 percent at the least.

In Game 1 of the championship, the ratings soared to 14.7 percent while audience share was 21.9 percent.

With Ginebra taking a 2-0 lead in the championship series, following the forfeiture of Talk 'N Text's Game 1 victory, more people are expected to stay glued to their televisions and watch as the Kings try to claim their first All-Filipino title in years.



JON DAN Salvador of Montaña Jewels tries to elude Welcoat's Marvin Ortiguerra . RYAN LIM

RP fielding tall volleyball team for world elims

HOST Philippines will go all out to exact vengeance against Indonesia in the 2006 Men's World Championship First Round Tournament Pool Asia-C slated March 2-6 at the University of San Carlos gymnasium in Cebu City.

But a stronger lure for local support is the fielding of what could be the tallest ever Philippine men's squad in the tournament.

International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) development commission officer Ramon "Tats" Suzara said the formation of the RP men's squad revolved around skill, speed and height to match the strength of Indonesia, which defeated the Philippines, 3-1, during the 2003 Vietnam SEA Games.

"As host country, we have the crowd advantage but we should also field a strong team," said Suzara, who described the RP team as the tallest squad ever formed with an average height of six feet.

The Philippine Volleyball Federation tapped the services of Sergio Isada Jr. and Ernesto Pamilar to coach the team, which will also represent the country in the SEA Games this December.

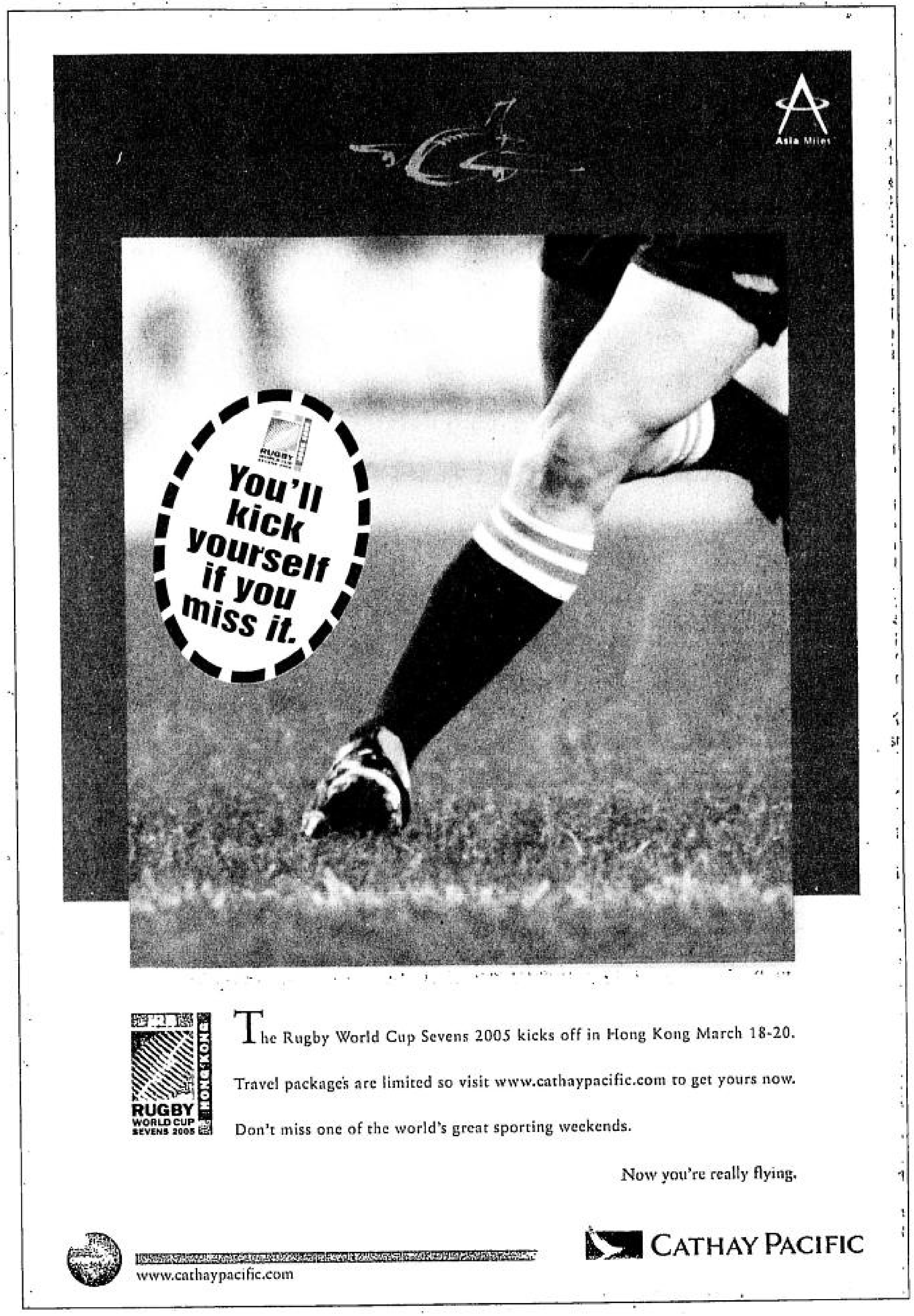
Isada is head coach of the University of the Philippines men's and women's volleyball teams in the UAAP while Pamilar handles Letran's men and women teams in the NCAA.

Making up the RP Team are Roger Ngo, a six-foot-seven player from De La Salle-Dasmariñas, Oliver Balse, Jerrico Hubalde, Herminio Gallo Jr., Janley Patrona, Edcer Penetrante, Roger Ngo, Dante Alinsunurin, Cesael de los Santos, Avelino Tongco, Gino Macailan, Jeffrey John San Jose, Beniamor Lingat, Ariel de la Cruz, Willy de la Cruz and Aristeo Billena.

Joining the Philippines and Indonesia in the five-day elimination round organized by the PVF headed by Roger Banzuela with support from the Cebu Visitors and Convention Bureau headed by Patrick Gregorio and Ag&A Communications are world's No. 36 Chinese-Taipei, Tonga and Macau.

The top two teams will advance to the second round while the finals will be held in Japan next year.

USC vice president for administration Rev. Fr. Vicente Uy and general services director Fr. Louie Punzalan are supervising work on sprucing up the gym in time for the five-nation event, the first to be held in the country since 1973 and Cebu's biggest volleyball hosting.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Green Rooster Gives Luck at Manila Pavilion Hotel

THIS February, when the Wooden Rooster bids us with its welcoming crow, Manila Pavilion Hotel invites you to enhance your luck in a special menu signifying good fortune. Titled Green Rooster Gives Luck at the Pavilion Court, this special menu is prepared by their Hong Kong chef, Yeung Siu Man. It includes dishes such as Salmon Sashimi, Shredded Duck with Golden Mushrooms in thick soup, Fresh Oysters with Nori in Spring Roll Wrapper, Sauteed Prawn Balls with Sweet and Sour Sauce in Taro Ring, Braised Spareribs of Pork with preserved Vegetables, Assorted Garden Vegetables with King Mushrooms, and more! Green Rooster Gives Luck is available from Feb. 7 to 12 during lunch and dinner.

To complete the Chinese New Year festivities is a Dragon dance that will greet guests around the hotel. It won't just enhance your luck, it will entertain you with its colorful appearance and nimble movements. Catch it on Feb. 9, the day of the Chinese New Year itself, at 11:30 a.m. For inquiries and reservations, please call 526-1212.

Love abloom at Taal Vista Hotel and Pearl Farm Beach Resort

LOVE is abloom at the new Taal Vista Hotel with "Suite Deals" from Feb. 1 to 28. Stay in any of their luxurious suites and get sweet and romantic surprises such as chocolates, flowers and a bottle of wine. The regular guestrooms are also offered on special rates inclusive of breakfast for two and a welcome drink for the couple. Experience a romantic dinner amidst the scenic Taal volcano and the cool weather of Tagaytay that is conducive to intimate moments. Valentine Dinner Specials for only P650 net, will be specially prepared by guest Chef Mikel Arriet Arruiz from Spain and will be available at the Café on the Ridge from Feb. 12 to 14. Enjoy the tapas bar and the drink-of-the-month while listening to the music of an acoustic band with Grooves-at-the-Lounge on Feb. 12, for a minimal fee of only P250 net that is consumable on food and drinks.

Get away from the overbooked restaurants and the congestion of the city. Surprise your loved one with a weekend trip and experience "The Dream Valentine" at the Pearl Farm Beach Resort". Love is abloom at Pearl Farm from Feb. 10 to 15 with its valentine promo. For only P5,900 net (per couple/per night), you get welcome drinks, roundtrip airport and boat transfers, overnight accommodations at the Balay House, breakfast for 2, a romantic dinner for two that comes with a glass of wine while being serenaded by an acoustic trio, flowers for the lady and a valentine token. Moreover, the Soothing Spa is offering a 20 percent discount on massage services. Nothing is more intimate than getting a relaxing massage together surrounded by lush vegetation and the sound of the trickling waterfall lulling you to sleep.

Love is in the air at The Bellevue

GREET the coming Valentine's Day with the timeless Jose Mari Chan as he serenades sweethearts from all over the metro with his classic and captivating melodies.

The Bellevue Hotel will be producing its first major concert at the Grand Ballroom where cocktails and drinks will be served this Feb. 12 at 8:30 p.m. Definitely a Valentine show to end all Valentine shows, Janet Basco will be spicing up the event as Jose Mari Chan's special guest. Preliminary sponsors are BMW, HSBC, Pepsi, Joey 92.3 and 105.1 Crossover. For inquiries, please call 771-8181.

Dusit Nikko's tempting February

ON Feb. 8 until 10, feast with the whole family as you toast for the picturesque Chinese New Year 2005. Happening at the Café Restaurant, experience delectable Chinese cuisines valued at P850 ++ per person. Available for lunch and dinner, a complimentary "tike," a famous Chinese delicacy, awaits group diners with a minimum of four (4) persons. For pastry lovers, grab a bite for best-selling Chinese goodies available for take-out at the Deli Shop. For reservations, contact the Café Restaurant at 867-3333 extension 3346.

Celebrate Valentine's Day with class and style in Dusit Hotel Nikko's wide selection of exquisite restaurants. Experience a different vibe with Manila's favorite Japanese restaurant, Benkay. Valentine's Day set menu is valued at P1,500 ++ per diner. With inclusions of Fresh Seafood, Chicken and Vegetables Cooked in Radish broth served with Ponzu Sauce, Grilled U.S Beef Sirloin, Deep-fried "Yuba" Rolled Prawn, Grilled Japanese Eel Roll and Fresh Japanese Strawberry for dessert.

Astoria Plaza's 'Zensational Suite Valentine'

INDULGE in the Season of Hearts by checking in at Astoria Plaza with your special someone in a 1-bedroom suite for only P5,254 net and a 2-bedroom suite for only P6,250 net. 1-bedroom suite package includes complimentary buffet breakfast for 2, complimentary bottle of sparkling wine with intimate set dinner for 2 inside your suite, serenade and butler service and surprise Valentine token. Inclusions for a 2-bedroom suite package are complimentary breakfast for 4, complimentary in-room dining for 4 and complimentary Valentine cocktails. Availing of any room package also entitles you to complimentary bottled mineral water, free use of the gym and the pool, free local newspaper and 10 percent discount at Stresscape Spa. Astoria Plaza's special Valentine room package is available from Feb. 11 to 14.

Stand out this Valentine's at New World Renaissance Hotel

STAND out and make an impression on that special someone as the New World Renaissance Hotel offers a choice of Valentine celebrations that will surely enhance romance. The deluxe hotel's ultra-romantic continental resto Bocarinos presents the "Before Sunset" six-course dinner menu on Feb. 13 and 14 at P2,288++ per person. The romantic dinner fete includes two glasses of Moet & Chandon, a box of delectable chocolate truffles, a lovely rose and surprise Valentine's gift for the ladies. An entire evening of love-inspired tunes performed by a jazz duo, ensures a most memorable Valentine. For inquiries and reservations, call 811-6888.

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VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

ONE of the most-plugged new programs on Channel 2 is "Most Requested Show," telecast weekdays at 11 a.m. The premiere episode of "MRS" on Jan. 31 gave the game-variety program an excessively enthusiastic start, with a parade, *ati-atihan* dancers, and all sorts of people behaving in a frenetic manner that they hoped viewers would mistake for genuine entertainment.

Alas for all of us, they were wrong.

There were also far too many hosts and other regular talents, and their sheer number made the proceedings even messier. Quantity is definitely not quality, despite some TV people's weird notions to that effect, and the sooner the people behind "MRS" separate the grain from the chaff among the program's on-camera talents, the better.

The show's basic premise and format are sound: It attracts viewers by promising to actualize their requests. Most of those wishes involve celebrities, so that gives the program even greater stellar appeal.

But the show will stand or fall on how interesting or entertaining those wishes are. Last Monday, they weren't all that unique, or else they weren't well-executed.

They included young stars "exchanging partners," and **Assunta de Rossi** washing clothes as she sang, **Mystica** doing karate chops as she performed, and **Melanie Marquez** accompanying herself on the guitar as she swept the studio floor with a broom.

Both Melanie and Mystica were either awkward or trying hard, so it was no surprise that home viewers' text votes made Assunta the winner of their particular competition.

Also not very successful was the portion that combined different requests for young starlets to dance, thereby filling the set with too many "dancers" who each had two left feet.

Then, the children of established celebrities were featured in another messy dance number, interspersed with shots of their parents' nervous faces.

Some of these "request" concepts were promising but their poor execution made them occasionally embarrassing to watch, thus definitely not entertaining.

The big competition on "MRS" is titled "Song-Its," and has singers leaving certain words out of the lyrics of the song snippets they sing, after which contestants choose from three possibilities what the correct missing word is.

This last part was fairly diverting, so, at least, the first telecast of "MRS" didn't end with a whimper. Still, we would urge the people behind the show to choose the requests they feature more judiciously, to insists on longer rehearsals so that young performers come up with less awkward song and dance numbers, and to be more selective about the numbers the show decides to feature. All else is pointless frenzy and amateurism.

Easy English seminar

CORBAN Learning Center (842-6665) will hold a seminar on English grammar, conversation and business writing for college students, new graduates, professionals and people who want to develop their communication skills. The seminar will be held for 10 consecutive Saturday afternoons, from 2 to 5 p.m., starting Feb. 5, totaling 30 hours.

Corban will also start a new seminar on English grammar, conversation and pronunciation on Sundays, 2-5 p.m., beginning on Feb. 6. The course will also run for 30 hours.

Feedback

FROM **Javier Galvan, MD**, Director of Instituto Cervantes in Manila: "I was pleasantly surprised to read your recent piece on the Spanish Channel on cable. As the director of the cultural arm of the Embassy of Spain, I am always encouraged when people comment on the usefulness of the Spanish language. You see, our institute's objective is to promote the Spanish language and culture here in the Philippines.

"I therefore fully agree with your observation that the Spanish channel, Television Española, is a powerful tool in reaching Filipino homes and giving a feel of Spanish culture."

Movies on TV

ON HBO, Feb. 3 at 11:15 p.m., "Gattaca." Feb. 4 at 2 :15 p.m., "Lone Star."

On Cinemax, Feb. 3 at 6 a.m., "The Age of Innocence." 1 p.m., "Mad Dog and Glory." 4 p.m., "A Man for All Seasons." Feb. 4 at 11:30 a.m., "The Prince and the Showgirl." 9 p.m., "Ghostbusters."

"MRS" hosts (clockwise from left) Roderick Paulate, Amy Perez and Marvin Agustin

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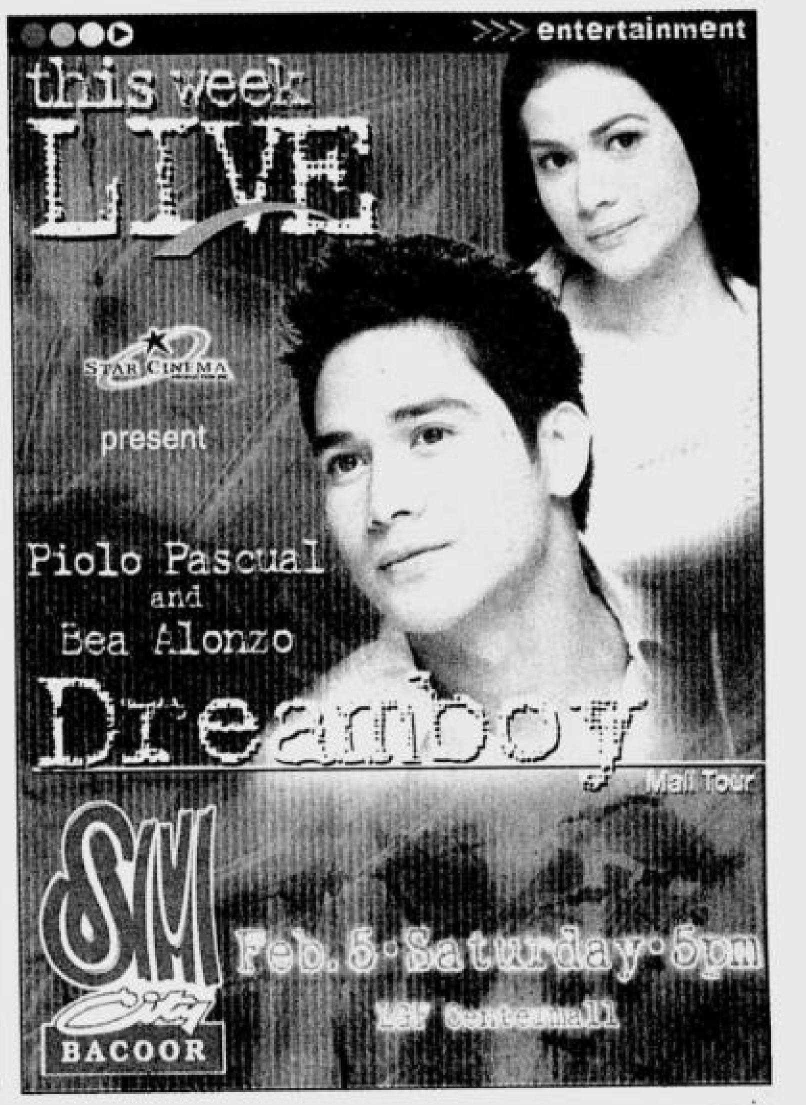

WEDNESDAY and THURSDAY 10 pm after Big News

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ABC
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER TV GUIDE

Friday February 4, 2005

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2				Showbiz No. 1	Sandara's Romance	Get Backers	Ragnarok	Masked Rider Ryuki	TV Patrol	Spirits	Krystala	Lovers In Paris	Hiram	Star Circle National Teen Quest	Star Circle Nat'l Teen Quest Elim Special			Insider	Private I
NBN	Value Vision	Value Vision		Value Vision	Teledyaryo	Value Vision		GSIS Member's Hour		Network Forum		Teledyaryo		9th Tinig Awards				Ugnayang Pambansa	
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	PBA Game-Bol	PBA				Sentro	PBA					Big News	Secrets	TNA Impact		Billboard On-Air
GMA 7	Leya (2:45 PM)	Joyride (3:15 PM)	Snow Angel (3:45 PM)		One Piece	Witch Hunter Robin	Slam Dunk	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Mulawin	Starstruck (8:45 PM)	Forever In My Heart (9:15 PM)		Bubble Gang			Saksi
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Entertainment Tonight	Just For Laughs	Enterprise		Monk		Dead Zone		Newswatch Now			
IBC 13		Lifestyle		EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Lifestyle		Retro TV		V League				Pulis Na Palaban	IBC News Tonite	GMA The Working President	
Solar		WWE Velocity		Thunder Box		Restal	Ozzy & Drix	Mucha Lucha!	Avengers	Stargate SG1		WWE Smackdown				WWE Velocity		Wow	
Nickelodeon	Dora, The Explorer	Little Bear	Blues Clues	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Nick Mix		100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd				Rugrats
MYX		Urban MYX		Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	Star MYX	Club MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		What I Like About You	JKX	The Today Show		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News	Entertainment Tonight	Will & Grace	Simple Life 2	Iron Chef		Fame		Tonight Show With Jay Leno		Eliminidate	Change of Heart
Cinema One		Row 4 Ang Baliktaran				Ubos Na Ang Luha Ko				Bikini Watch			Review Night	Emong Salvacion				Beauty And The Best	
Studio 23								Teen Titans	Justice League	Wazzup Wazzup	Spider-Man The Animated Series	Miss Match		Playing It Straight		News Central	The Oprah Winfrey Show		Yes Dear
AXN		Cruel And Unusual				Now See This	Now See This	Samurai X	Samurai X	Beastmaster		The Right Stuff II	Rated X	Cold Squad		The Mask of Zorro			
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Home Improvement	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	TNA Wrestling		Totally Outrageous Behavior Caught On Tape	When Hidden Cameras Attack/ Weird TV	Ultimate Force		Friends	Totally Outrageous Behavior Caught On Tape
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News		World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic	On Assignment	NG See		Weather Gone Mad	Seismic Seconds	The Volcano that Blew the World Away		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles With Dr. Brady Barr	Wild		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		NG See		Weather Gone Mad	Seismic Seconds
Solar Sports	Copenhagen Masters MxD Final			The Next Gen Hardcourt '05 SFinals	Sounds of the Finals			NBA Fan Favorite '05 feed				In This Corner		NBA Game Cleveland @ Miami					GWS ep.5-2005
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Molto Mario	Sweet Dreams	30 Minute Meals	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Ming's Quest	Revealed With Jules Asner		New York Nick	Lifestyle		Guess Who's Coming To Decorate	Back To Basics	Les Miserables	
HBO					Swept Away (4:25 PM)			Bike Squad (5:55 PM)		A Man Apart (7:15 PM)				Conspiracy Theory				Jaws 2 (11:10PM)	
Star Movies		Rob Roy				Visitors (5:15 PM)				Rambo First Blood 2			Opening Night	The Gathering			May		
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Police Academy	Premiere	Toon Pick	Yu-Gi-Oh!	Zoids: Fuzors	The Looney Tunes Show		The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	Courage The Cowardly Dog	Ed, Edd N Eddy	Megas XLR	Aqua Teen (11:15PM)	Yu-Gi-Oh!
ESPN				Atlantic Coast Conf. Nc State vs. Nrth Carolina				Goals!	Motorsport Asia	NFL's Greatest Game			Atlantic Coast Conf. Nc State vs. Nrth Carolina				Sportscenter Taiwan	Eng. Premier League Preview	Sportscenter Asia
Disney Channel	Kim Possible	Totally Spies	Lizzie McGuire	Even Stevens	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	The Legend Of Tarzan	Lilo & Stitch/Un-talkative Bunny	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	According To Jim	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax					Silent Cry (4:45PM)			Owning Mahowny				Ghostbusters			Scorcher (9:45 PM)			Deadly Messages (11:15PM)	
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	Happy Hour				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Agency II		Sue Thomas: FB Eye		Murder Without Conviction			Child Of Our Time (10:35PM)		Agency II (11:25PM)
Discovery Channel		Power Zone				Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Junkyard Wars		American Chopper		Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery		Crime Night	
MTV Philippines		Whatever Things		Non-Stop Hits		Non-Stop Hits		MTV Get Spotted	MTV Loveline			MTV Brand New	Be Seen @ MTV			Newlyweds		VH1 Hits/ Video Collection	
Sports Plus	Watson's - Champions Chall. Day4							Italian Serie A				World Poker Tour ep.4 Costa Rica				Inside the PGA	FBR Open Day1		
EWTN	Does The Church Still Teach That	Angelus (3:15PM)	Stations Of The Cross	Image Of God	Faith Factory	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	Search And Rescue	Your Call	EWTN Gallery	Life on The Rock Encore		Gospel Of Life In Health Care	Defending Life	Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	Backstage	Father Corapi And The Catechism Of The Catholic Church	

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Ang inyong tagapaghatid ng ulat-pangmulat
TUWING HUWEBES pagkatapos ng American Idol
Ating kabalitaan
Cheri Mercado
Dito lang sa ABC
INQ TV

MBC radio stations dzRH, Love Radio, Yes-FM top Metro survey

MANILA Broadcasting Co. (MBC) flagship AM station dzRH and FM stations Love Radio 90.7 and Yes-FM 101.1 took all the top spots in the most recent Metro Manila Coincidental Radio Survey (CRS) conducted by the Radio Research Council (RRC).

According to the survey that covered 21,357 households in Metro Manila, dzRH emerged number one among all AM stations, while Love Radio and Yes-FM secured the number one and number two spots, respectively, among all FM stations.

dzRH, the longest-running radio station in the Philippines, bested all other stations on the AM band from Monday through Sunday.

In the same study, Love Radio topped all radio stations and ruled the FM band, with an audience share of 20.9 percent.

Yes-FM finished second with an audience share of 17.8 percent.

The RCC is the official survey arm of the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP).

The RCC used the CRS method to determine listening habits from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. In this type of survey method, information is obtained through face-to-face interviews.

CRS is considered the most reliable research methods because interviewers carry calibrated digital radio sets to instantly verify the station that a household is listening to.

dzRH also emerged as the top AM station in the RCC "Expanded Metro Manila" survey encompassing Metro Manila; Malolos, Bulacan; Cavite City, Cavite; San Pedro, Laguna; and Antipolo, Rizal.

The Expanded Metro Manila survey again used the CRS method to gather data from 41,586 households.

In yet another RRC study using the Day After Recall method, dzRH once again secured its position as the leading AM station. In this survey, researchers interviewed respondents from 1,724 households and used a structured questionnaire to reconstruct their listening habits during the previous day.

DID YOU KNOW...

Jackie Forster, former wife of retired basketball star **Benjie Paras**, was seen watching "Meet the Fockers" with an athletic-looking guy at Greenbelt 3 in Makati City. The guy is a close friend of Alaska players Mike Cortez and Brandon Cablay. Also seen that night was Viva Hot Babe Jen Rosendahl with a tall, good-looking man. Jackie was in a yellow tank top with "anyone, anytime, anywhere" printed on it.

SeeMall!

AYALA CINEMAS THX
Movies/schedules may change without prior notice. For verification call 729-7777

	ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB1 GREENBELT 1	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU
1	THX SHALL WE DANCE	ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13	A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT	A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT 1:20, 4:05, 6:50, 9:35	GUARANTEED SEATS THX A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT 12:25, 3:10, 5:55, 8:40, 11:25	ITS ALL ABOUT LOVE
2	ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13	ELEKTRA	ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13	SHALL WE DANCE 12:45, 3:00, 5:15, 7:30, 9:45	GUARANTEED SEATS THX SHALL WE DANCE 2:15, 4:30, 6:45, 9:00, 11:15	HAROLD & KUMAR
3	ELEKTRA	SHALL WE DANCE	GUARANTEED SEATS THX ELEKTRA 1:10, 3:30, 5:50, 8:10, 10:30		GUARANTEED SEATS MEET THE FOCKERS 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00, 11:30	ELEKTRA
4	RACING STRIPES	A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT	WITHOUT A PADDLE		GUARANTEED SEATS ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13 2:35, 4:45, 6:55, 9:05, 11:15	MEET THE FOCKERS
5	A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT		RACING STRIPES		GUARANTEED SEATS ELEKTRA 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10, 11:30	
6			SHALL WE DANCE			
7			MEET THE FOCKERS			

At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	AYALA CENTER CEBU
Photoworld Exhibit February 3-8, 2005	Valentine Serenade at Food Establishment February 12-14, 2005	Cebu Dental Society's 54th Medicine Week Society February 2, 2005

ENTERTAINMENT LIVE!

GREENBELT 3 PARK	GREENBELT 3 LOBBY
Valentine Show featuring Bituin Escalante February 12, 2004	Vera Wang Gown Exhibit February 17-28, 2005

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A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT

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Prizes not claimed within 60 days from the receipt of the notification shall be forfeited with prior approval of DTI.

All employees of Ayala Cinemas and its subsidiaries including their relatives up to the second degree in consaguinity affinity are disqualified from joining the promo.

All prizes are not convertible to cash but are transferable.

The raffle draw will be help at the 5th floor of Glorietta 4, Ayala Center on March 2, 2005 at 2pm with the presence of a DTI representative.

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SIDE A Band
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Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 (DTS) RESERVED

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 SCHOOL OF SEDUCTION
2 (DTS) MEET THE FOCKERS
3 (DOLBY) ELEKTRA
4 MAD HOUSE

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146
1 MAD HOUSE
2 (DOLBY) SHALL WE DANCE
3 (DTS) ELEKTRA
4 MEET THE FOCKERS

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 WHITE NOISE
2 UNO
3 (DOLBY) BLADE TRINITY

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) MAD HOUSE
2 MEET THE FOCKERS
3 (DTS) ELEKTRA
4 SCHOOL OF SEDUCTION
5 HANEP SA PORMA HAYOP SA GANDA

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283
1 THE GHOST
2 HANEP SA PORMA HAYOP SA GANDA
3 (DTS) WHITE NOISE
4 (DOLBY) KUNG FU HUSTLE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 HONEY
2 ELEKTRA
3 WHITE NOISE
4 GEORGE & THE DRAGON

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 WHITE NOISE
3 (DOLBY) BLADE TRINITY
4 (DTS) ELEKTRA

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) MEET THE FOCKERS
2 UNO
3 (DTS ES) ELEKTRA
4 SCHOOL OF SEDUCTION

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 MEET THE FOCKERS
2 SCHOOL OF SEDUCTION
3 (DOLBY) HAUNTED SPIRIT
4 (DTS) ELEKTRA

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 WHITE NOISE
2 BLADE TRINITY
3 (DOLBY) KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 (DTS) 2046

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
2 RAISE YOUR VOISE

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 7953320
1 BLADE TRINITY
2 ELEKTRA
3 (DOLBY) WHITE NOISE

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• REGIONAL CINEMAS •

STA. ROSA (049) 837-0907
1 MEET THE FOCKERS
2 SHALL WE DANCE
3 SCHOOL FOR SEDUCTION
4 MAD HOUSE
5 ELEKTRA

LIPA (043) 757-3664 (043) 312-5870
1 BLADE TRINITY
2 ELEKTRA
3 IN SEARCH OF AN IMPOTENT MAN
4 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
5 WHITE NOISE

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-4332
1 SHALL WE DANCE
2 MAD HOUSE
3 MEET THE FOCKERS
4 BLADE TRINITY
5 ELEKTRA

ANGELES (045) 892-2348
1 ELEKTRA
2 SCHOOL FOR SEDUCTION
3 HAUNTED SPIRITS 2
4 MEET THE FOCKERS

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8188
1 ELEKTRA
2 SHALL WE DANCE
3 RACING STRIPES
4 MEET THE FOCKERS
5 IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE
6 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270
1 BIRTH
2 2046
3 SCHOOL FOR SEDUCTION
4 MEET THE FOCKERS
5 HELLWOLF
6 ELEKTRA

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 (034) 441-0459
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 NED KELLY
3 ELEKTRA
4 WHITE NOISE
5 SCHOOL FOR SEDUCTION
6 UNO

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1 ELEKTRA
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6 2046

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NYOY and the Mannos

'OPM Classics' by Nyoy and Mannos launched

ACOUSTIC artists Nyoy Volante and the Mannos launch their third studio album from Vicor Music Corp. today at Dish in Quezon City.

Titled "OPM Classics," the studio album attempts to bridge the gap between generations of music lovers by including golden songs of yesteryears.

The carrier single is the Martin Nievera hit "Each Day With You." It first hit the airwaves on Jan. 28 and it comes with a music video directed by Paolo Banaldo.

Album producer Alwyn Cruz says of Nyoy and the Mannos, "We gave them enough space to explore their musical diversity."

"OPM Classics" by Nyoy Volante is a fitting first salvo for the 40th anniversary of Vicor Music Corp. this year. Vicor managing director Steven Tan has promised other exciting releases, plus the CD reissues of the company's catalogue of local talents like Zsa Zsa Padilla, Basil Valdez, Side A, and many others.

Marley birthday marked for a month

ADDIS ABABA—Month-long festivities got under way here Tuesday to mark the 60th anniversary of the birth of the late reggae superstar Bob Marley, cut down by cancer aged 36 back in 1981.

Those at the opening ceremony included the grandson of former Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie, considered the spiritual leader of the Rasta movement to which Marley belonged, and Hollywood movie star Danny Glover.

Hundreds of thousands of Rastafarians and music lovers descended on the Ethiopian capital for celebrations in the capital of Ethiopia, the country that Jamaican-born Marley regarded as his spiritual home because of his Rastafarian religious beliefs.

Others at the two-hour rites included members of the Rastafarian community, the city mayor, local leaders of the Orthodox and Muslim religions, and members of Marley's own family.

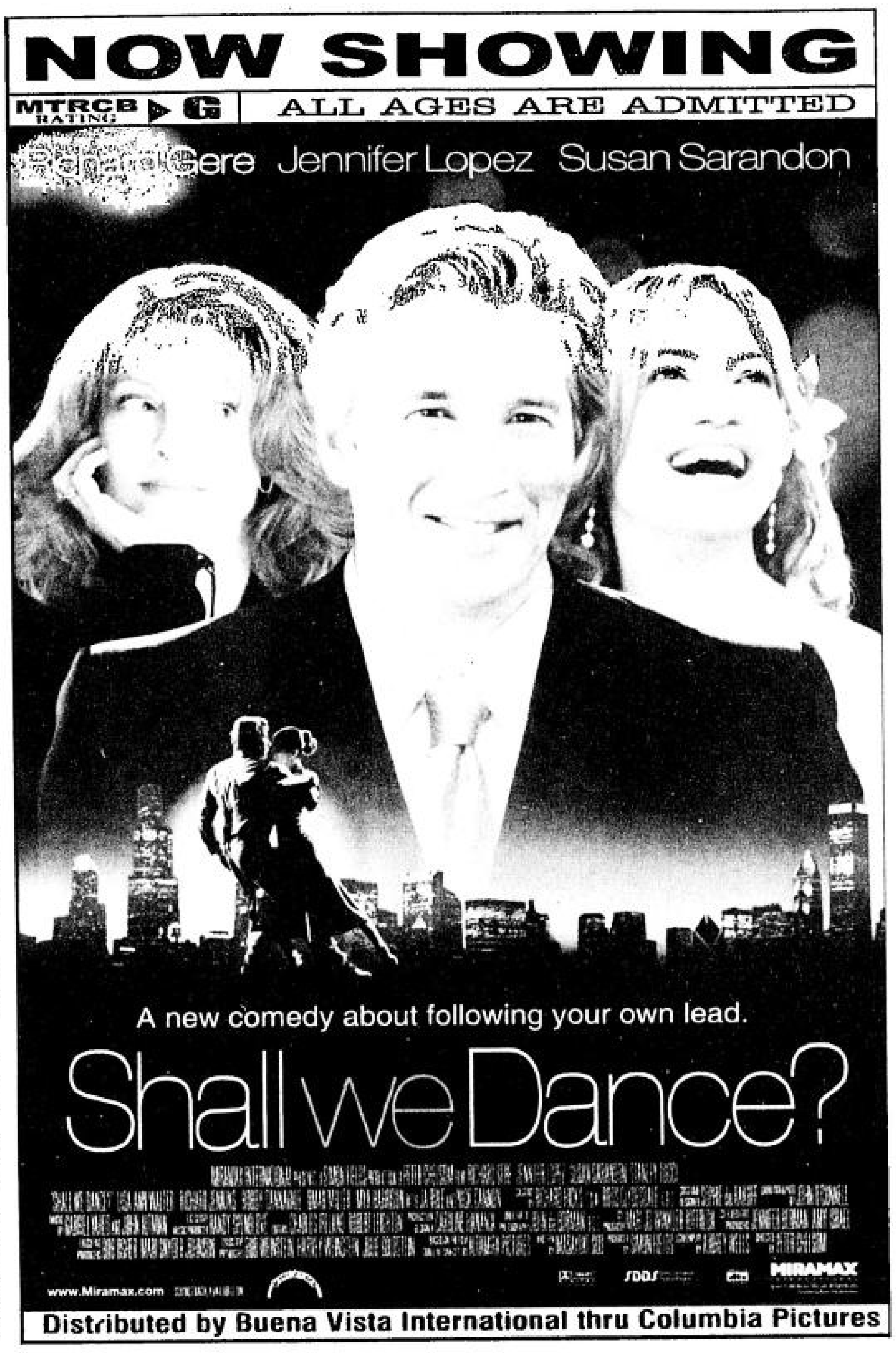
Ethiopia, home of the African Union and birthplace of Rastafarianism, was chosen by Marley's family to host the events.

It was the first time that celebrations of the singer's birth had ever taken place outside Marley's Jamaican birthplace.

"It has always been the wish of Bob Marley to return to Ethiopia and become a Rastafarian ... and with the African Union, Addis Ababa is the capital of Africa and therefore a very symbolic place," Marley's widow Rita said ahead of the celebration.

"We are here tonight to commemorate Bob Marley's memory and to realize that brother Bob lives on," said Said Desta-Meghoo-Peddie, head of the Bob Marley Foundation, speaking on behalf of the widow: "It is a fulfillment for all of us to stand here in our fatherland, the land of Haile Selassie Jah Rastafari."

Adherents of the Rastafarian movement that Marley championed regard former Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie (Ras Tafari) as their spiritual leader. *AFP*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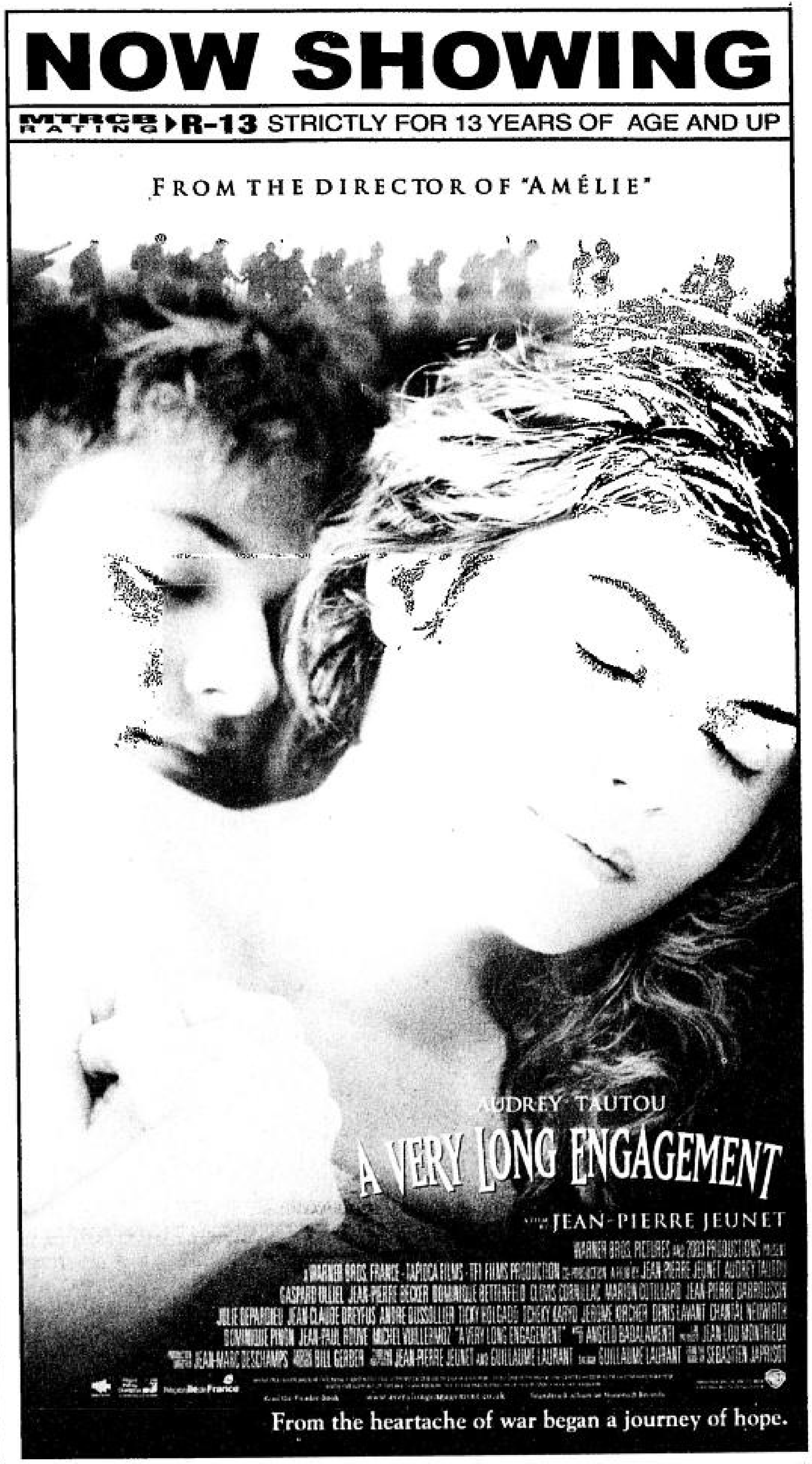
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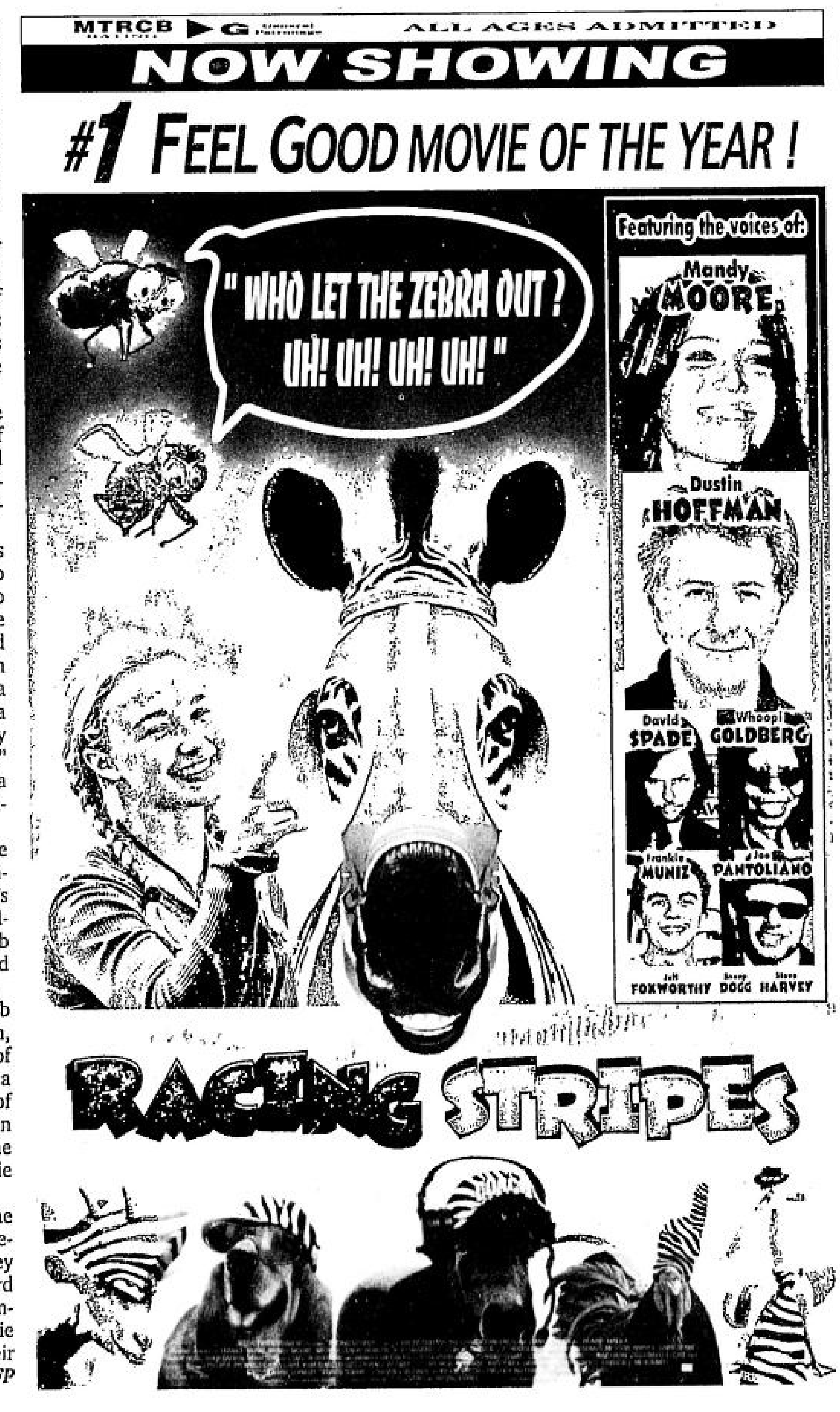
MTRCB RATING ▶ R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND UP
FROM THE DIRECTOR OF "AMÉLIE"
AUDREY TAUTOU
A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
JEAN-PIERRE JEUNET
From the heartache of war began a journey of hope.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NOW SHOWING
#1 FEEL GOOD MOVIE OF THE YEAR !
" WHO LET THE ZEBRA OUT ? UH! UH! UH! UH! "
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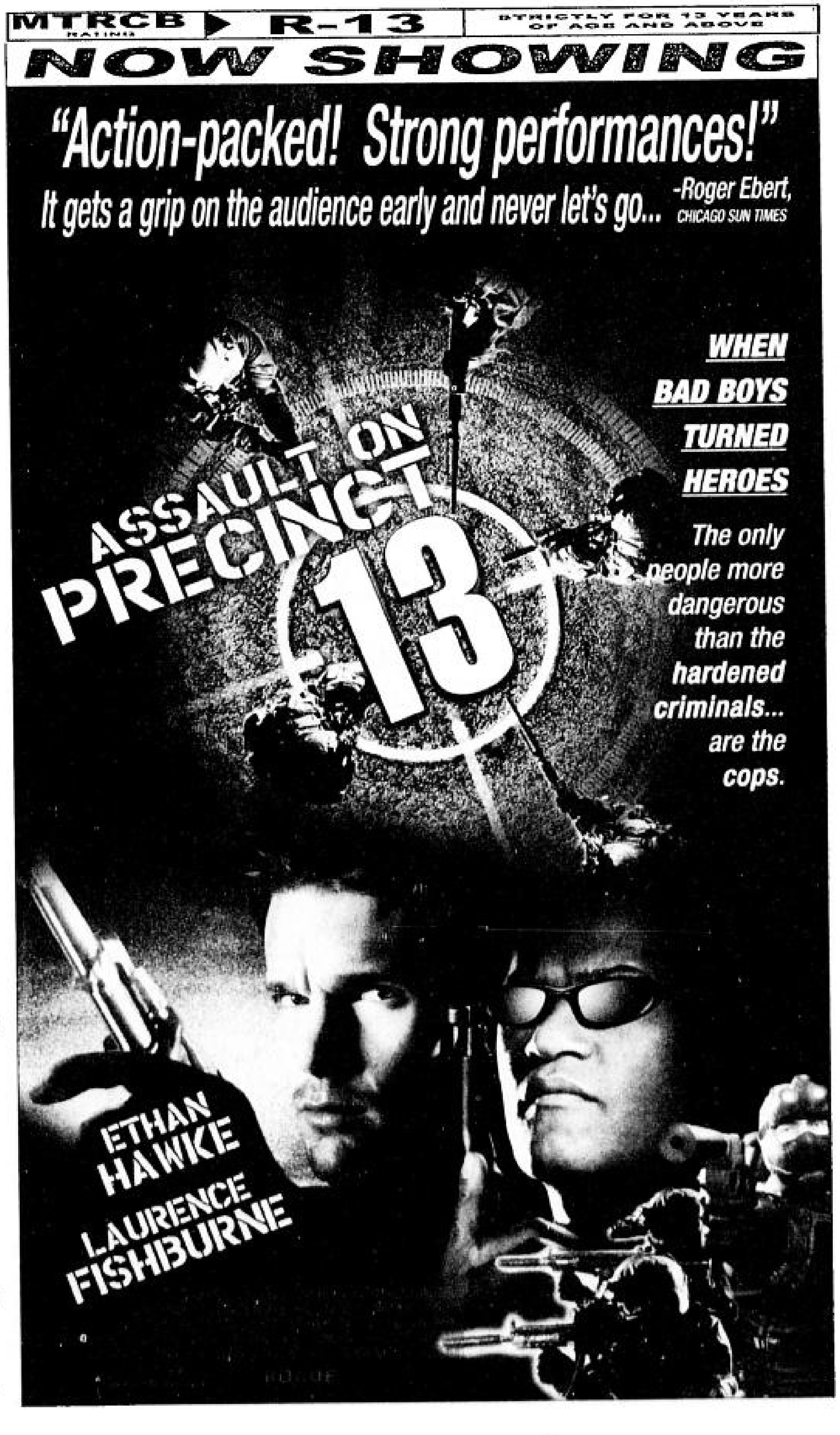
Frankie MUNIZ
Joe PANTOLIANO
Jeff FOXWORTHY
Snoop DOGG
Steve HARVEY
RACING STRIPES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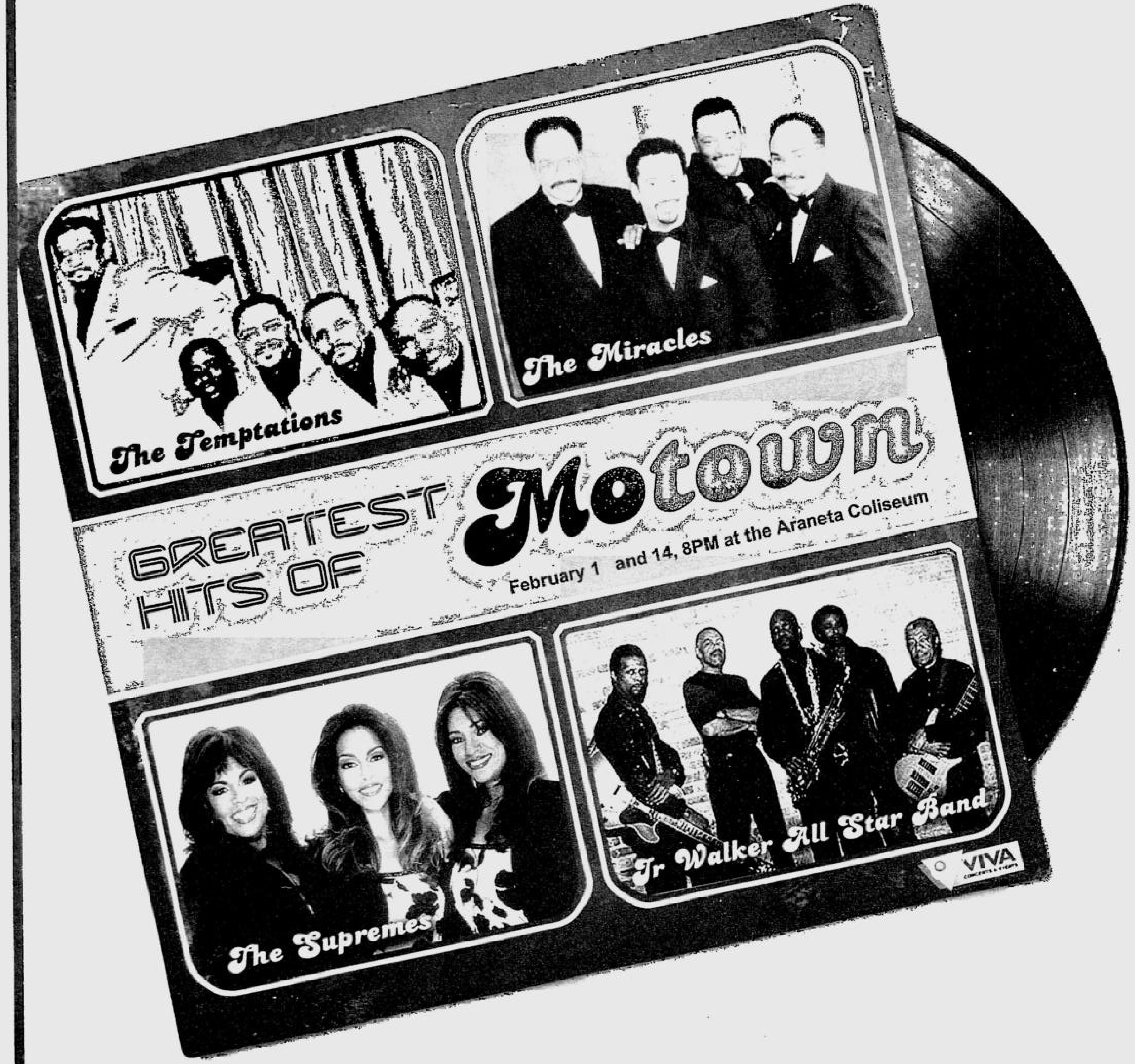
"Action-packed! Strong performances!"
It gets a grip on the audience early and never let's go... -Roger Ebert, CHICAGO SUN TIMES
WHEN BAD BOYS TURNED HEROES
The only people more dangerous than the hardened criminals... are the cops.
ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13
ETHAN HAWKE
LAURENCE FISHBURNE



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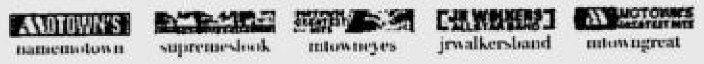

namemotown supremeslook mtowneyes jrwalkersband mtowngreat

Textcards

mtownhits groovylook mtownpic mtowngroove motownconcert

Tones	Artist	Keyword
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Just My Imagination	*The Temptations*	myimagination
Ohh Baby Baby	*The Miracles*	ohhbaby

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Wallpapers, text W <keyword> to 2346. Ex: W tempmygirl
Icons, text L <keyword> to 2346. Ex: L namemotown
Textcards, text TC <keyword> to 2346. Ex: TC mtownhits

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See flyers for details. Approved by DTI-NCR. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0449 Series of 2005.

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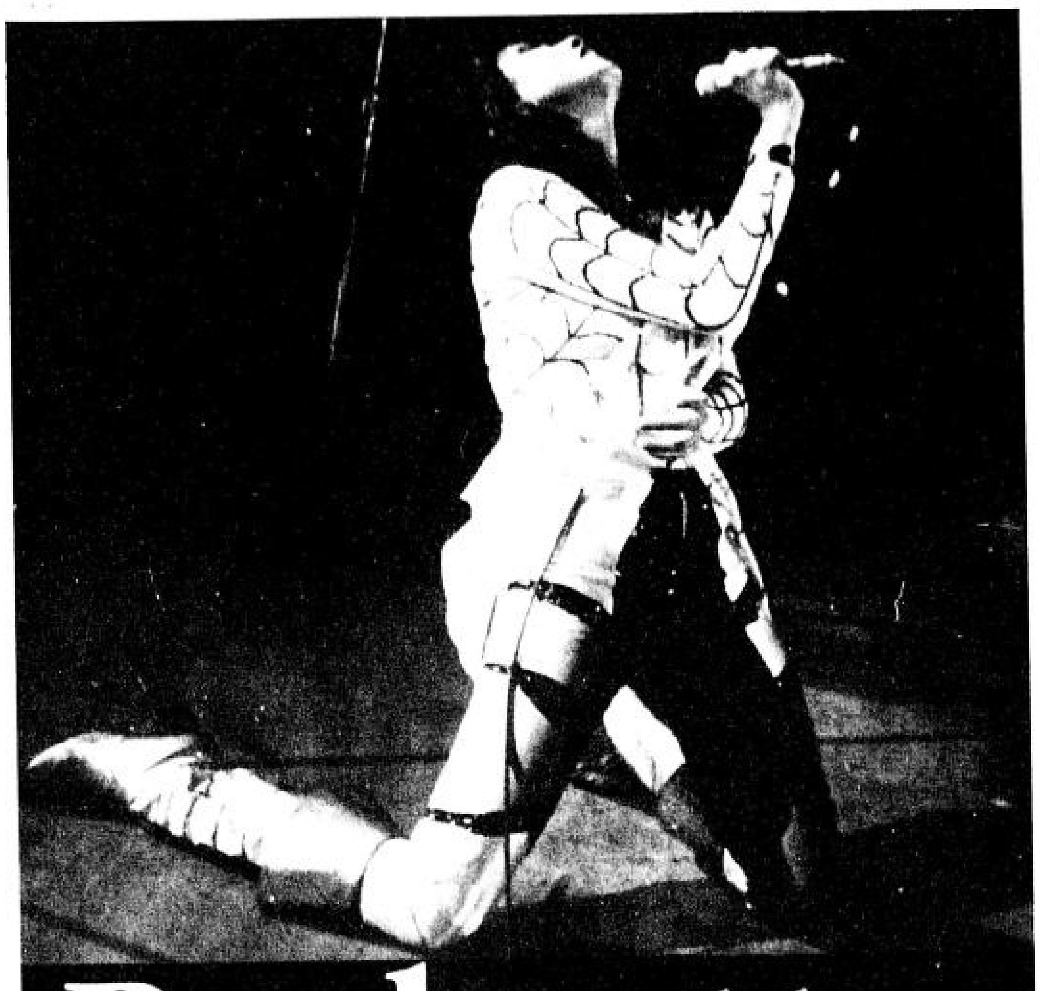


Rock goddess to domestic diva

By Nini Valera

THE PINOY Rock goddess of the '70s is now a domestic diva.

"They say that when you get older, you go back to what you're meant to be," says the rock artist formerly known as Sampaguita. "Look at my house—you won't see a trace of Sampaguita."

The house, a rented bungalow in Parañaque City, belongs to Tessy Alfonso, the woman who became Sampaguita in the '70s. Her transformation from svelte rocker into earth mother has become complete with her sense of awareness that all things must come to pass in this material world.

"I cook, I paint, and I do pottery," she says, with the distinctive throaty voice of Sampaguita. "I decorate my friends' homes if they ask me."

She also serves a dish of home-cooked chicken rendang that hints at the fire of the spices that came through the Straits of Malacca and evokes her heritage from Java, Indonesia, where she was born.

CALL HER Sam: no regrets

Sampaguita, the star, was someone else's dream, not hers

Call me Sam

But Sampaguita will never go away. She lives in the collective memories of a generation that watched her rise to new heights in local music with her five record albums and several New Moon concerts. Her songs and her spirit continue to roam the airwaves, courtesy of dzRJ. She still responds to the name Sampaguita and she wants to be called Sam.

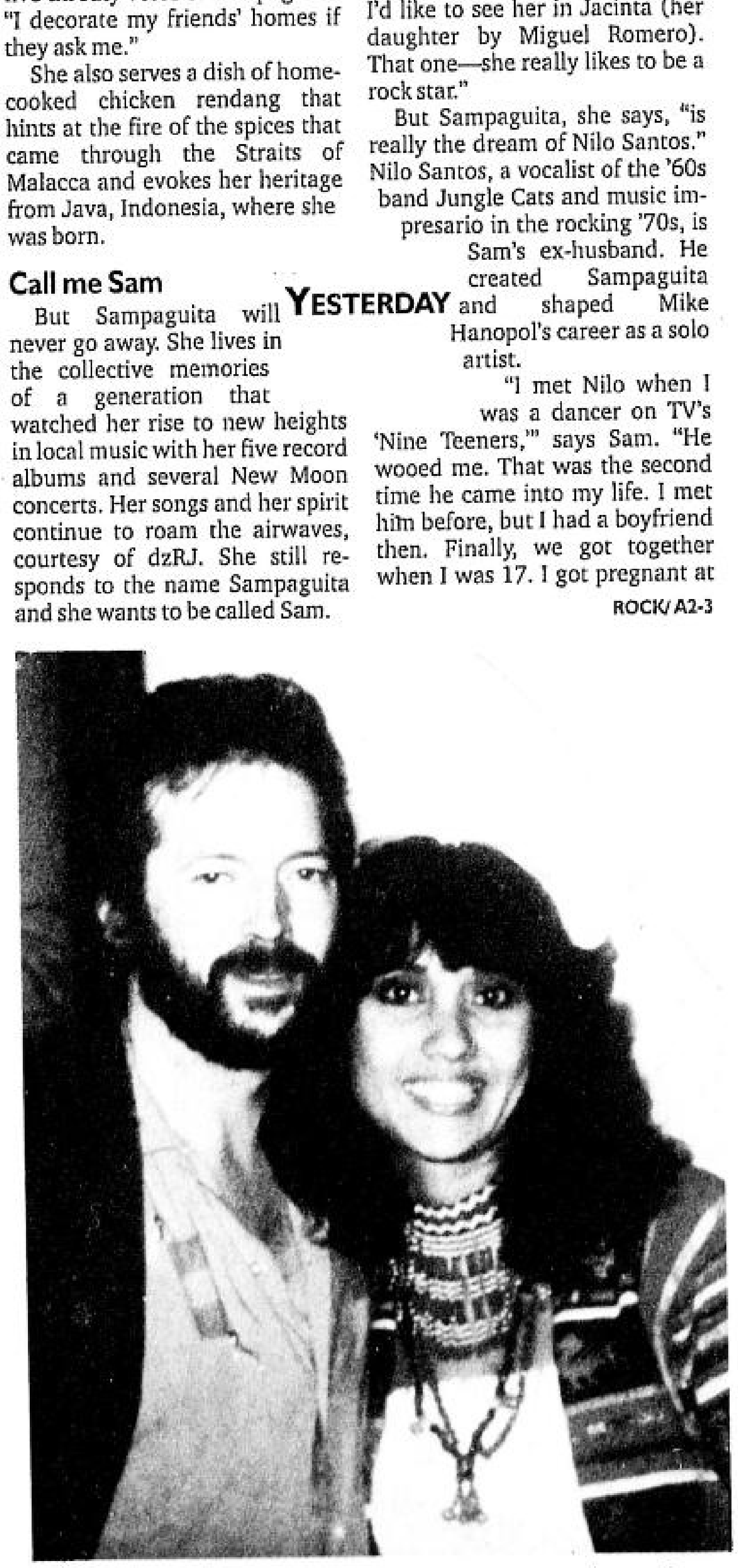
"They say that rock 'n' roll will never die," says Sam. "That is why Sampaguita is still alive. But I'd like to see her in Jacinta (her daughter by Miguel Romero). That one—she really likes to be a rock star."

But Sampaguita, she says, "is really the dream of Nilo Santos." Nilo Santos, a vocalist of the '60s band Jungle Cats and music impresario in the rocking '70s, is Sam's ex-husband. He created Sampaguita and shaped Mike Hanopol's career as a solo artist.

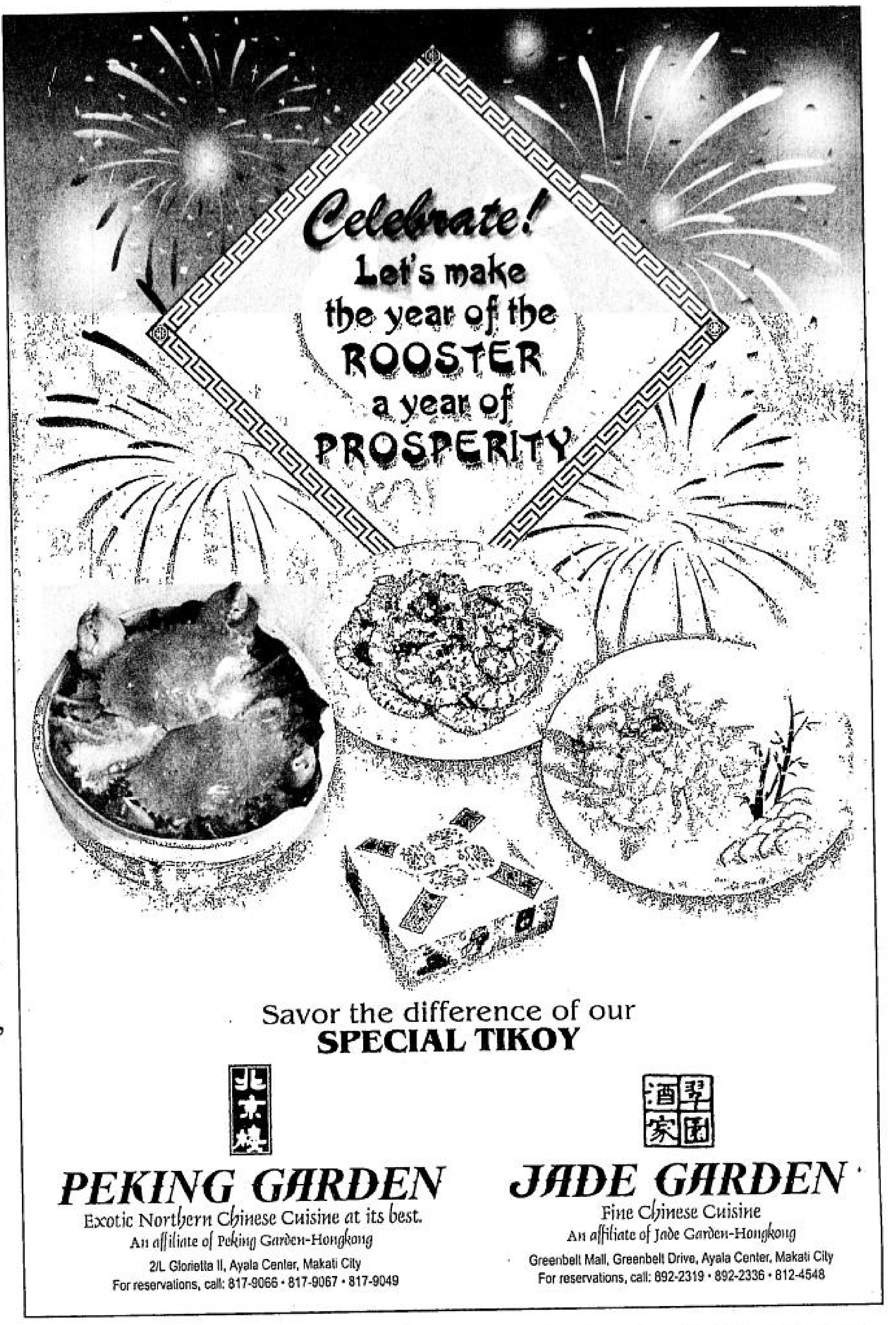
"I met Nilo when I was a dancer on TV's 'Nine Teeners,'" says Sam. "He wooed me. That was the second time he came into my life. I met him before, but I had a boyfriend then. Finally, we got together when I was 17. I got pregnant at

ROCK/ A2-3

YESTERDAY



THANK YOU, Sir. In 1980 with Eric Clapton, rock icon then and now. He couldn't resist the fast chick from Manila.



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SM Supercenter Sucat

Feb. 4, 2005
SM City Manila

Feb. 5, 2005
SM City Baguio
SM City Lucena
SM Megamall
SM City Pampanga

Feb. 6, 2005
SM City Marilao
SM City Pampanga
SM City Sta. Mesa

Feb. 7, 2005
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SM City North Edsa

Feb. 8, 2005
SM City Bicutan

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SM City Baguio
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SM City Bicutan
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Embrace an exciting year for new ideas and great innovation as well as technological changes. Enjoy the [illegible] activities SM Supermalls has lined up for you this month.

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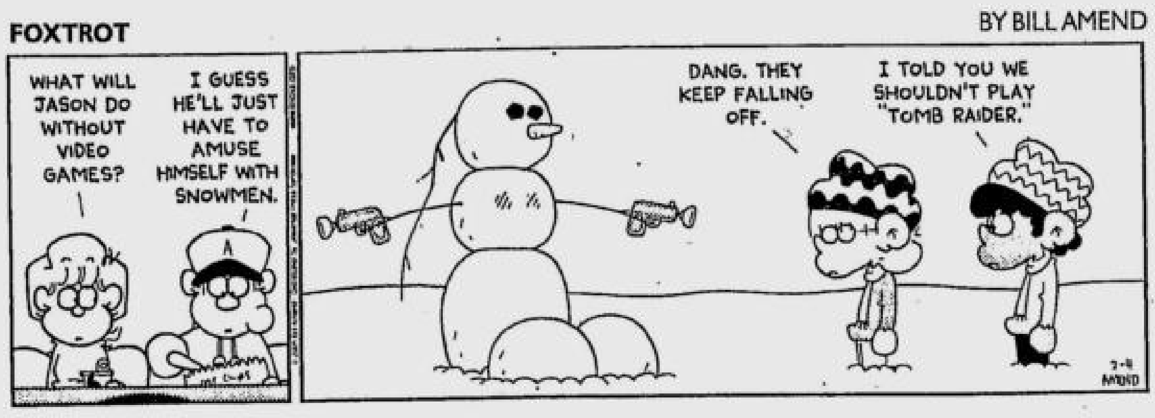
[illegible] • SM City Cagayan de Oro • SM City Davao • SM City Iloilo • SM City Baguio • SM City Marilao • SM Supercenter Sucat • SM Megamall

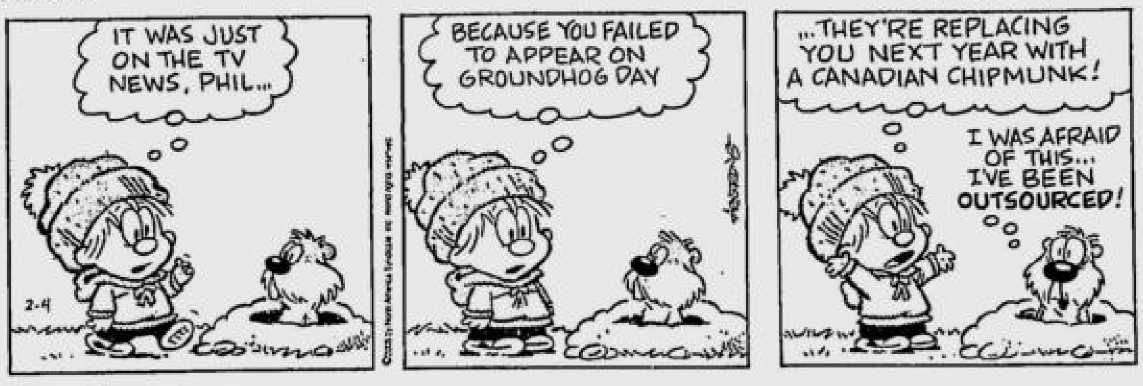
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


WHAT WILL JASON DO WITHOUT VIDEO GAMES?
I GUESS HE'LL JUST HAVE TO AMUSE HIMSELF WITH SNOWMEN.
DANG. THEY KEEP FALLING OFF.
I TOLD YOU WE SHOULDN'T PLAY "TOMB RAIDER."
2-4 AMEND

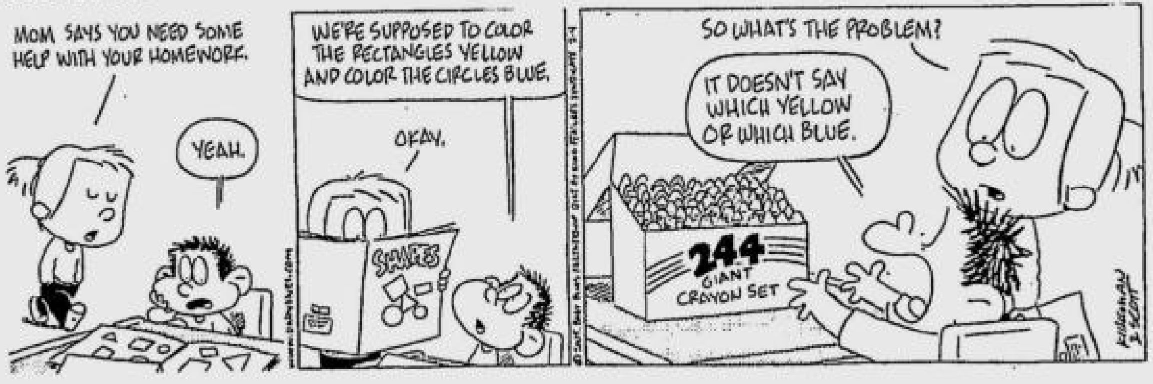
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


IT WAS JUST ON THE TV NEWS, PHIL...
BECAUSE YOU FAILED TO APPEAR ON GROUNDHOG DAY
...THEY'RE REPLACING YOU NEXT YEAR WITH A CANADIAN CHIPMUNK!
I WAS AFRAID OF THIS... I'VE BEEN OUTSOURCED!
2-4

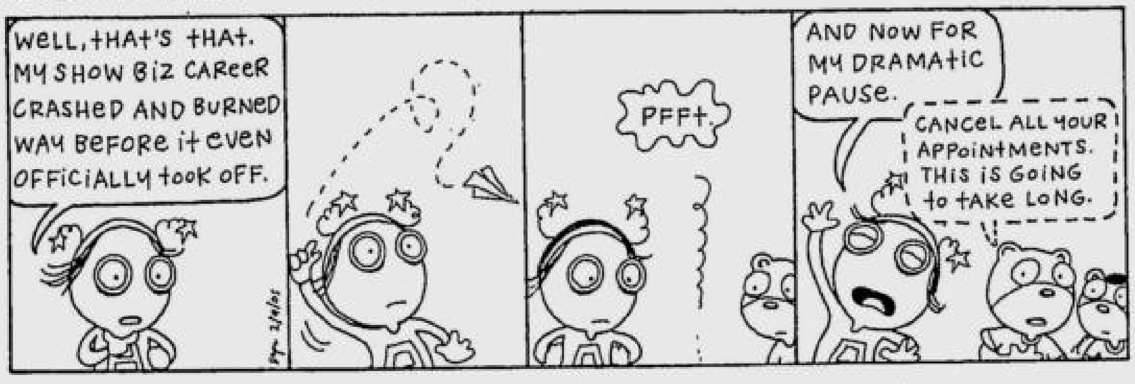
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


MOM SAYS YOU NEED SOME HELP WITH YOUR HOMEWORK.
YEAH.
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO COLOR THE RECTANGLES YELLOW AND COLOR THE CIRCLES BLUE.
OKAY.
SHAPES
SO WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?
IT DOESN'T SAY WHICH YELLOW OR WHICH BLUE.
244 GIANT CRAYON SET

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


WELL, THAT'S THAT. MY SHOW BIZ CAREER CRASHED AND BURNED WAY BEFORE IT EVEN OFFICIALLY TOOK OFF.
PFFT.
AND NOW FOR MY DRAMATIC PAUSE.
CANCEL ALL YOUR APPOINTMENTS. THIS IS GOING TO TAKE LONG.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're lively, entertaining and original in your approach to things. You're not afraid to break boundaries, because you live by your own moral code. You have lots of energy and can accomplish much in your lifetime. You have a multitude of interests, but you always work with long-range goals. Work hard this year to construct something important to you.
Birthdate of: Betty Friedan, author; Clint Black, country singer; Chogyam Trungpa, Tibetan Buddhist teacher.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Talk to others about your hopes and dreams for the future. Their feedback might prove to be helpful to you.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Because of the current planetary lineup, you make a fabulous impression on others now. Everyone thinks you're great. (Why not milk this for all it's worth?)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You're curious by nature. Now you really want to do something different or go someplace you've never been to before. You want adventure & stimulation!

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): This is the time of year when you need to consolidate what you own and figure out what you owe others. Tie up loose ends regarding insurance, inheritances & possessions.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You're aware of the impression you create on others. Why not explore this more deeply? Don't just guess about your relationships; talk to others about what's important to you.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Sometimes you're casual and relaxed; at other times, you like to create order out of chaos. Now is one of the times when you really want to clean up your act.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Reward yourself with some good times and entertaining diversions. Be open to romantic flirtations. You want to have fun now—and why shouldn't you?

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Your focus on home and family also includes a focus on real estate now. You want to make improvements to where you live. Great—this is the time to do it.

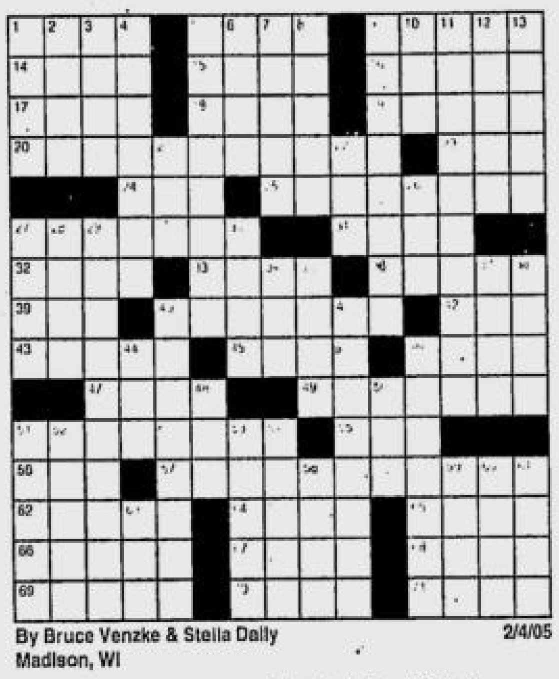
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You can't stay at home now. Your pace is busy, and you might as well accept this. Get out and hustle with short trips, buying and selling, making appointments and talking to siblings.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Think about how you can improve your earnings now. You're also shopping and buying beautiful things; think about how you can get the best value for your money.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): With four planets in your sign, you cannot help but attract others now. You're like a beacon in the night! Enjoy this popularity. (This also makes you influential.)

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): It's important to get as much rest and relaxation as you can. Try to spend more time by yourself.

DAILY CROSSWORD

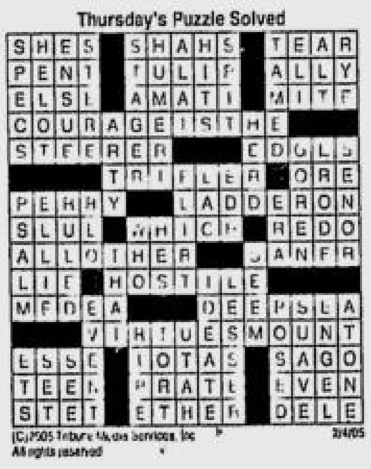


By Bruce Venzke & Stella Daily
Madison, WI
2/4/05

ACROSS
1 Sidling crustacean
5 Poetic measures
9 Christina of "Sleepy Hollow"
14 __ avis
15 Last breath
16 Fictional Frome
17 Neighbor of Santa Barbara
18 Skye or Wight
19 Seaside
20 Twisted knitting
23 Inhabitant of
24 Fed. govt. $ agcy.
25 Remnants of a grenade
27 Bookstore shopper
31 Speaker of Cooperstown
32 Tons and tons
33 Mind readings?
36 Arrive at
39 AOL, for one
40 Letter-shaped implement
42 Morsel for Swaps
43 Bloodsucker
45 Dick Van __
46 Bond pic
47 Friendly
49 Attorney general, 1985-1988
51 Made a noisy commotion
55 Roller coaster unit
56 Dogpatch adjective
57 News syndication
62 Funny Jack
64 Frosted
65 Adored one
66 Close, in poetry
67 "__, Mia"
68 Vend
69 Actress Joanna
70 Beyond sight
71 Can't stand

DOWN
1 Gator cousin
2 Indian royalty
3 Part of U.A.E.
4 Rescue from financial difficulties
5 Fetchables for dogs
6 River beneath the Brooklyn Bridge
7 Perry or Havelock
8 Pearly whites
9 Energize a battery again
10 Skater Midori
11 Target, for one
12 Social class
13 Chip maker
21 Dash lengths
22 Component of some TVs
26 Bakery buy
27 Beach toy
28 Otherwise
29 Certain aerialist
30 Not opt.
34 Regular Joe
35 Rice beverage
37 Soaks up rays
38 Sioux tribe
40 Pitchers and quarterbacks
41 Aromatic evergreen
44 Start of an era?
46 Whirling __
48 Medical pic
50 Deface
51 Spy's garment?
52 Jungle vine
53 Author Jong
54 Jolfless joe
58 Antitoxins
59 Brainchild
60 Gun maker
61 Vogue rival
63 Writer Fleming

Thursday's Puzzle Solved



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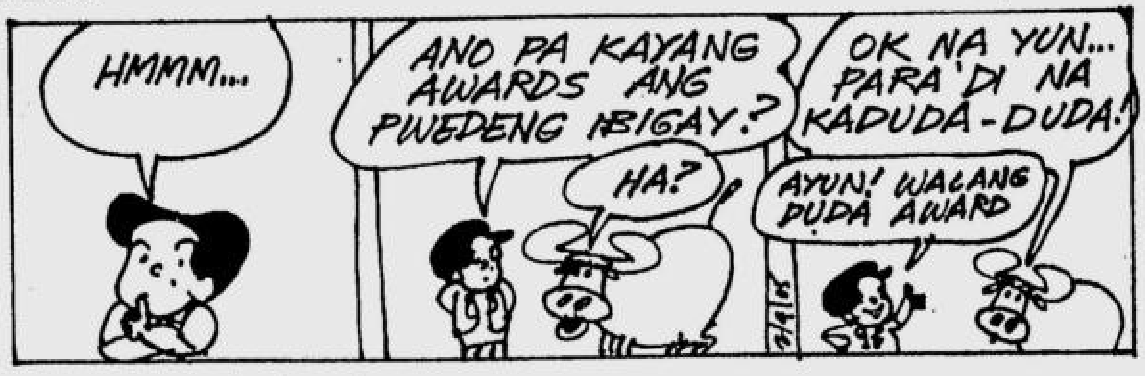
2/4/05

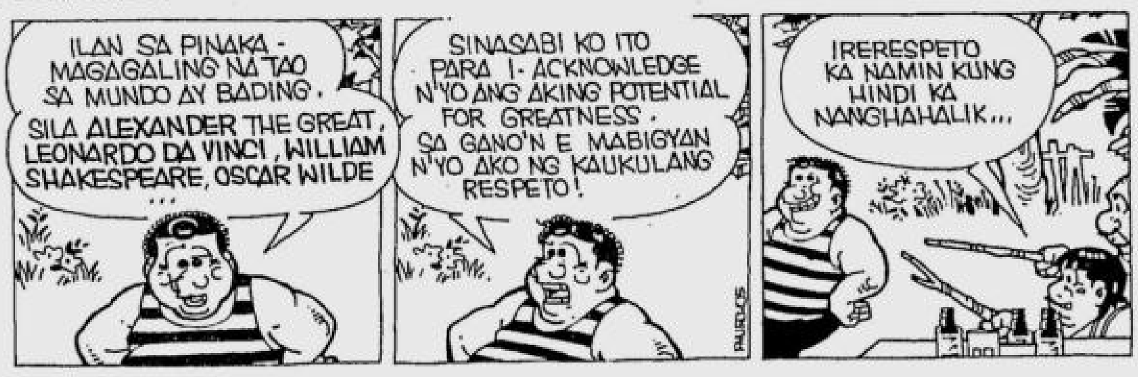
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


HMMM...
ANO PA KAYANG AWARDS ANG PWEDENG IBIGAY?
HA?
OK NA YUN... PARA 'DI NA KADUDA-DUDA!
AYUN! WALANG DUDA AWARD

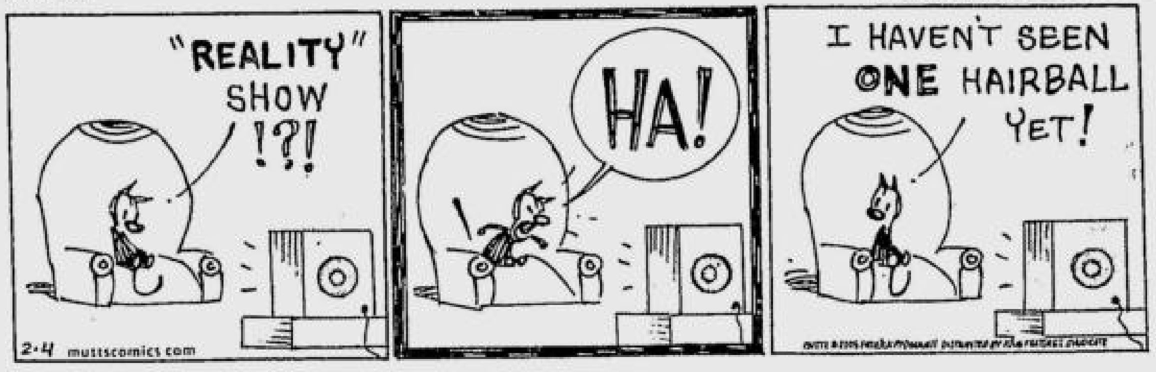
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


ILAN SA PINAKA-MAGAGALING NA TAO SA MUNDO AY BADING. SILA ALEXANDER THE GREAT, LEONARDO DA VINCI, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, OSCAR WILDE...
SINASABI KO ITO PARA I-ACKNOWLEDGE N'YO ANG AKING POTENTIAL FOR GREATNESS. SA GANO'N E MABIGYAN N'YO AKO NG KAUKULANG RESPETO!
IRERESPETO KA NAMIN KUNG HINDI KA NANGHAHALIK...

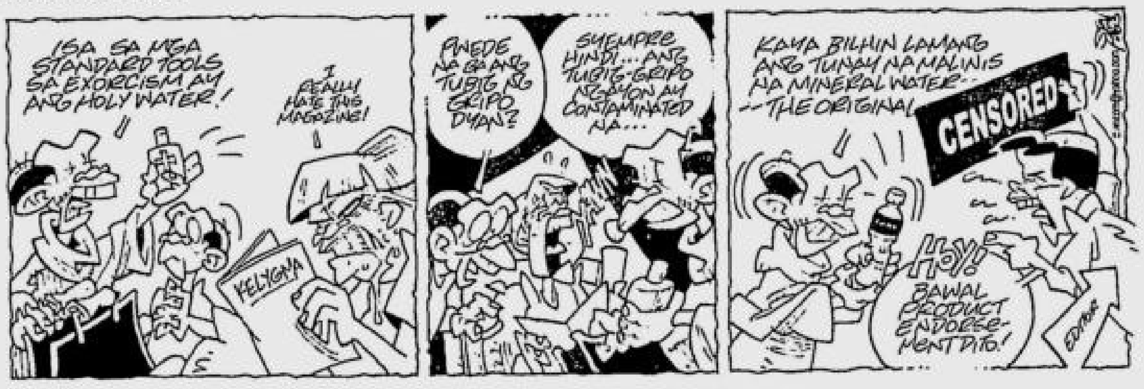
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


"REALITY" SHOW !?!
HA!
I HAVEN'T SEEN ONE HAIRBALL YET!
2-4 muttscomics.com

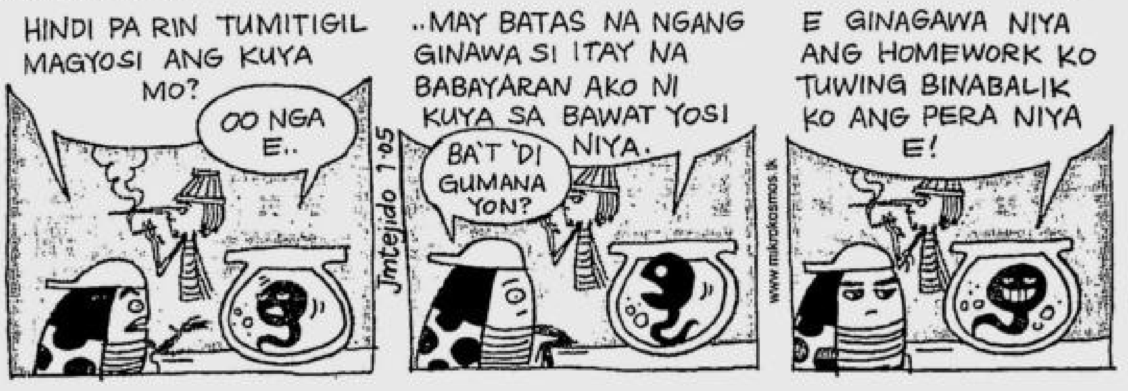
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


ISA SA MGA STANDARD TOOLS SA EXORCISM AY ANG HOLY WATER!
I REALLY HATE THIS MAGAZINE!
KELYGMA
PWEDE NA BA ANG TUBIG NG GRIPO DYAN?
SYEMPRE HINDI... ANG TUBIG-GRIPO NGAYON AY CONTAMINATED NA...
KAYA BILHIN LAMANG ANG TUNAY NA MALINIS NA MINERAL WATER-- --THE ORIGINAL
CENSORED
HOY! BAWAL PRODUCT ENDORSEMENT DITO!
EDITOR

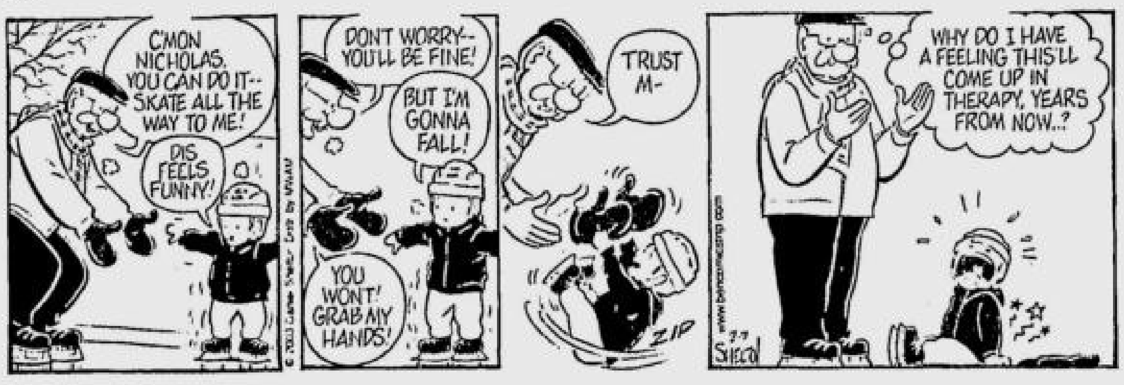
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


HINDI PA RIN TUMITIGIL MAGYOSI ANG KUYA MO?
OO NGA E..
..MAY BATAS NA NGANG GINAWA SI ITAY NA BABAYARAN AKO NI KUYA SA BAWAT YOSI NIYA.
BA'T 'DI GUMANA YON?
E GINAGAWA NIYA ANG HOMEWORK KO TUWING BINABALIK KO ANG PERA NIYA E!
Jmtejido 1'05
www.mikrokosmos.tk

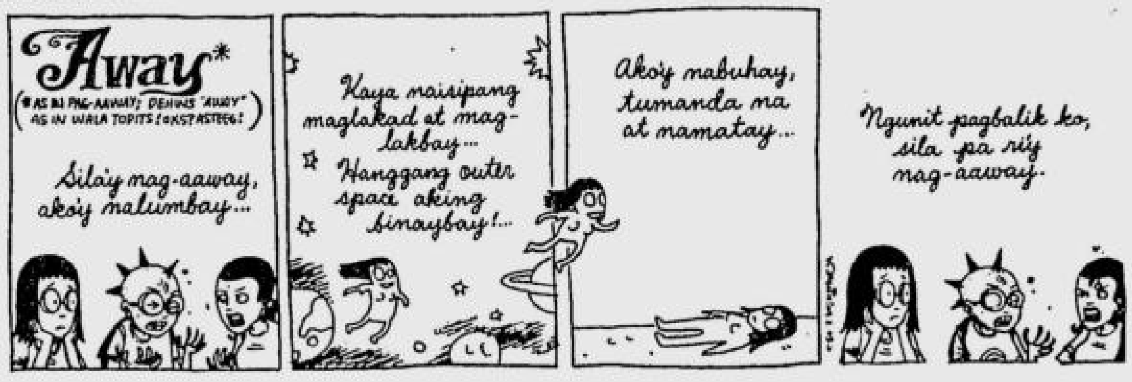
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


C'MON NICHOLAS. YOU CAN DO IT-- SKATE ALL THE WAY TO ME!
DIS FEELS FUNNY!
DON'T WORRY-- YOU'LL BE FINE!
BUT I'M GONNA FALL!
YOU WON'T! GRAB MY HANDS!
TRUST M-
ZIP
WHY DO I HAVE A FEELING THIS'LL COME UP IN THERAPY, YEARS FROM NOW..?

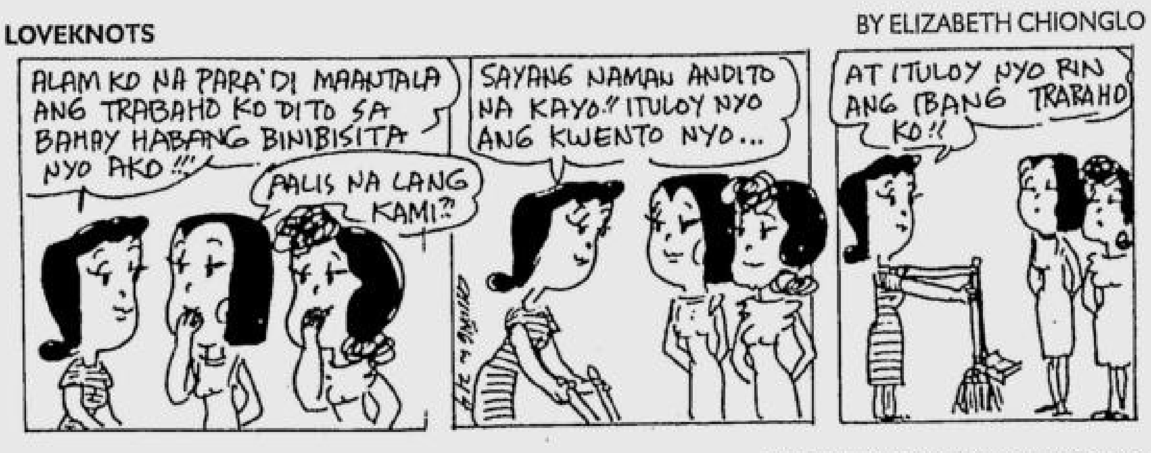
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


Away*
(*AS IN PAG-AAWAY; DENNIS "AWAY" AS IN WALA TOPITS! OKSPASTEEG!)
Sila'y nag-aaway, ako'y malumbay...
Kaya naisipang maglakad at maglakbay... Hanggang outer space aking binaybay!...
Ako'y nabuhay, tumanda na at namatay...
Ngunit pagbalik ko, sila pa rin'y nag-aaway.

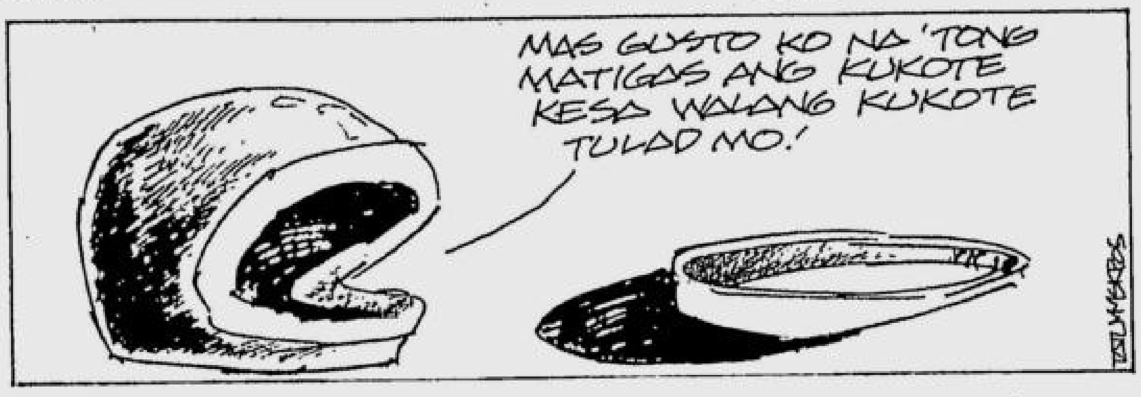
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


ALAM KO NA PARA 'DI MAANTALA ANG TRABAHO KO DITO SA BAHAY HABANG BINIBISITA NYO AKO!!!
AALIS NA LANG KAMI?!
SAYANG NAMAN ANDITO NA KAYO!! ITULOY NYO ANG KWENTO NYO...
AT ITULOY NYO RIN ANG IBANG TRABAHO KO!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


MAS GUSTO KO NA 'TONG MATIGAS ANG KUKOTE KESA WALANG KUKOTE TULAD MO!

Rock goddess to domestic diva

From page A2-1

18, married Nilo at 19. It was probably meant to be."

When their first child, Dolly, turned 5, Tessy Santos, as Sam was called then, accepted modeling assignments. "Nilo never stopped me from doing what I wanted to do," she says. "I did ramp modeling for Colleciones New York and Bagong Anyo. I modeled for about three years."

Female Hanopol

He also did not stop Sam from going with another man, singer Cassius Estacio, who appeared in the first Filipino rock opera "Mahal," written by Henry Francia and Betsy Romualdez. In "Mahal," Sam performed with then rising singer Jacqui Magno. She also brought Nilo to invest in "Mahal."

Nilo also invested in another chance with Sam, who got pregnant with their second child, Cowboy, now 29 and lead guitarist of the cult rock group Blue Rats. In 1978, Nilo invested in Sampaguita.

"At that time, Nilo already produced Mike Hanopol and he needed a female version so he could have a firm grip on the rock scene," recalls Sam. "Then he saw me. Nilo talked to me about becoming Sampaguita. He begged me and even sent me to Hong Kong so I would agree [to become Sampaguita]. I was a model before so I was like, 'What's this? It's so *baduy*.' I didn't want to do it. I didn't want to be Sampaguita."

A different girl

But in 1978, during the first New Moon concert at the Araneta Coliseum, Sampaguita was introduced to a Pinoy Rock audience who worshipped the likes of Hanopol, Pepe Smith, and

ROCK/ A2-4

PG-13 3RD WEEK!
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Dennis Ladaw - The Manila Times, Jan 26, 2005
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Prizes are:
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Hotel accomodation for 4 (four)
2 days and 3 nights
Consolation Prizes:
"Without A Paddle" T-shirts and Teddy Bear
Photo entries will be exhibited on Feb. 10 and onwards at Robinsons Movieworld ERMITA
showing today at all Robinsons Movieworld
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SM CINEMA movietime

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2 MAD HOUSE
3 SCHOOL FOR SEDUCTION
4 BLADE TRINITY

sm city baguio
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 MEET THE FOCKERS
3 UNO
4 ELEKTRA

sm city bacoor
1 IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE
2 RACING STRIPES
3 ELEKTRA
4 SHALL WE DANCE
5 ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13
6 MEET THE FOCKERS
7 WHITE NOISE
8 KUNG FU HUSTLE

sm city batangas
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2 BLADE TRINITY
3 ELEKTRA
4 WHITE NOISE

sm city dasmariñas
1 SHALL WE DANCE
2 ELEKTRA
3 MAD HOUSE
4 MEET THE FOCKERS

sm city lucena
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 HELLWOLF
3 UNO
4 RAISE YOUR VOICE

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

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2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 MEET THE FOCKERS
4 IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE
5 HAROLD AND KUMAR
6 OCEAN'S TWELVE
7 BLADE TRINITY
8 ELEKTRA

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3 WHITE NOISE
4 MAD HOUSE
5 KUNG FU HUSTLE
6 ELEKTRA
7 RESERVED...
8 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

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2 SCHOOL FOR SEDUCTION
3 RAISE YOUR VOICE
4 HAROLD AND KUMAR
5 KUNG FU HUSTLE
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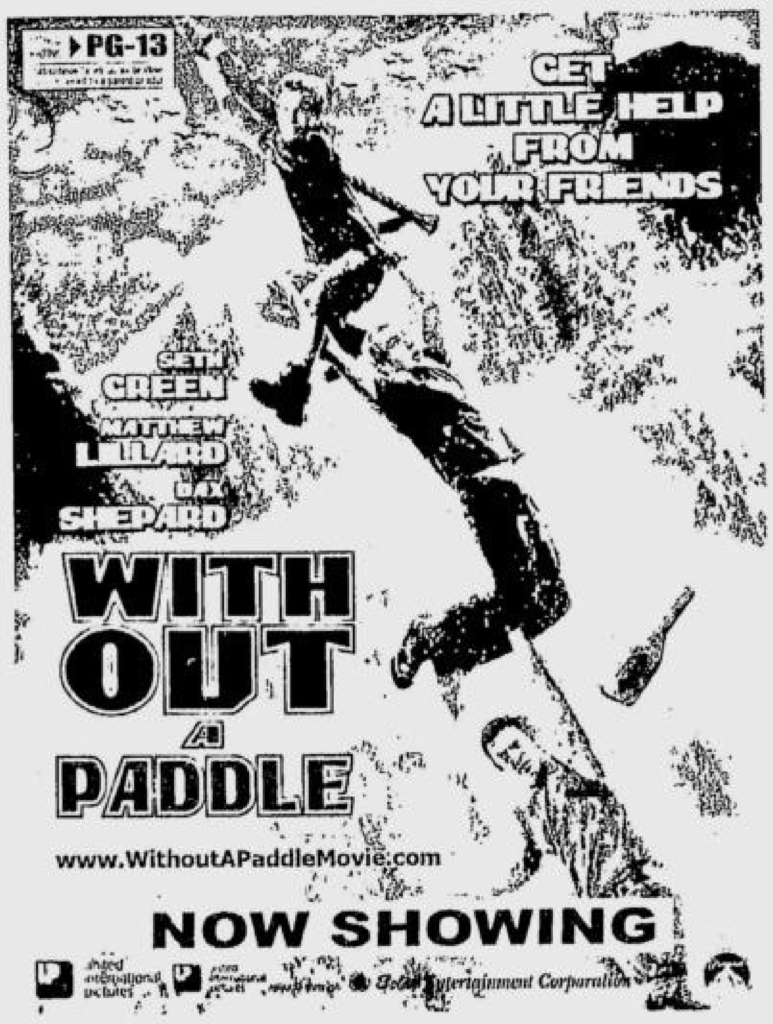
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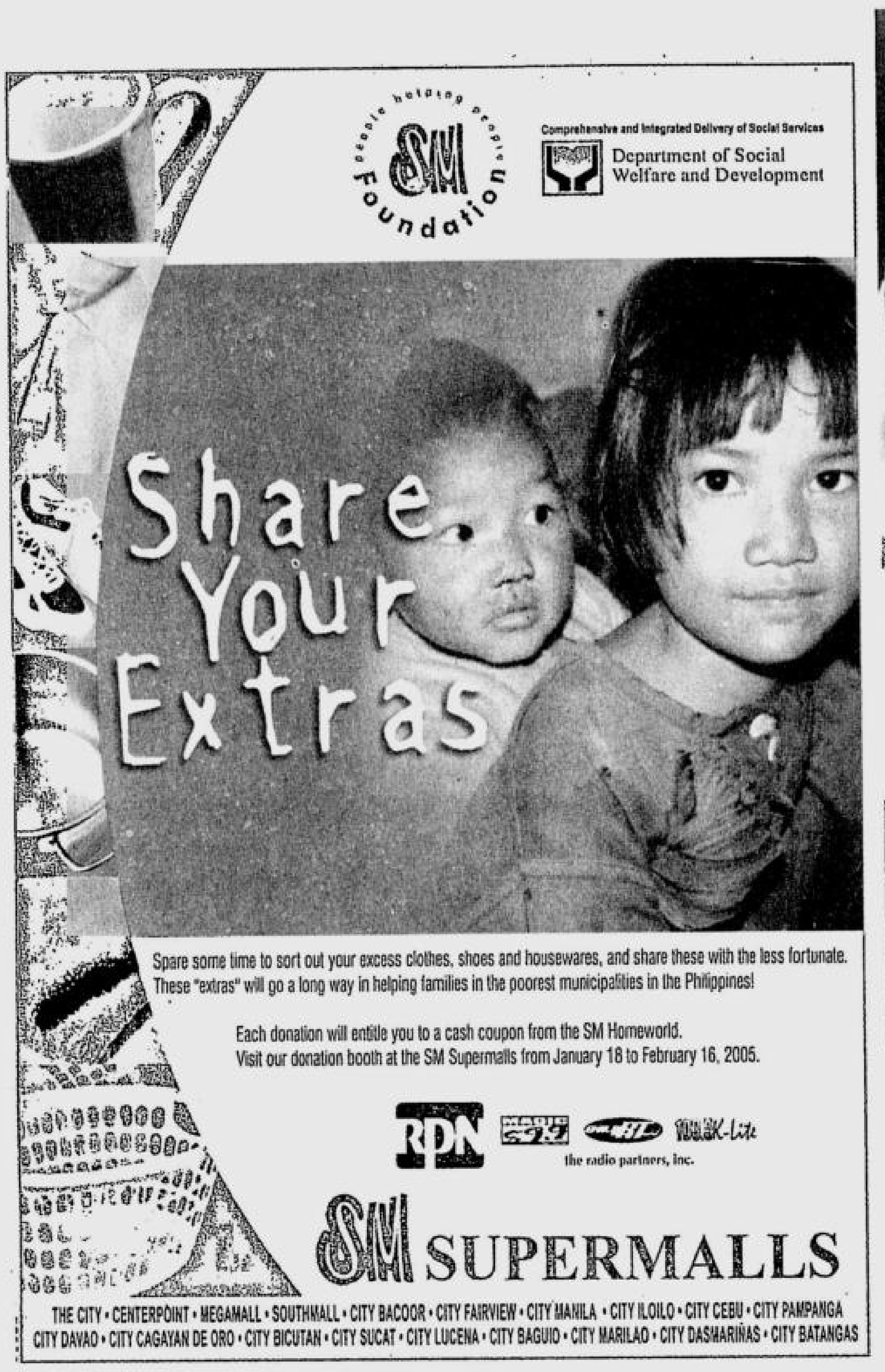

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WARNING: She's writing a tell-all book.

From page A2-3

Resty Fabunan (of Maria Cafra). The audience liked what they said and yelled for more. "I sang covers of Eric Clapton and Dave Mason songs," says Sam. "I was a hit. I was a girl and I was different. The audience loved me."

The late legendary percussionist Nick Boogie came up with the name Sampaguita. "[Nick] said I was the only flower among the thorns," says Sam.

As the fledgling rock singer, Sampaguita recorded her first album in 1978. The self-titled album spawned the monster hits "Bonggahan," "Tao," and "Sa D'yos Lamang," "Easy, Pare," "Kumadre." Sam's collaboration with lead guitarist Gary Perez in the songs also led to her romantic liaison with Gary.

"*Alam mo naman ako, malandi* ," says Sam, recounting the instant spark between her and Gary. "So Gary made his move."

Anakbayan, Gary's band with drummer Edmund Fortuno, was Sampaguita's back-up band. "What Nilo did was to merge Sampaguita with Anakbayan," says Sam. "It was like bringing me closer to temptation. Then one day, Gary and I were together. All Nilo said was 'make sure, something would come out of your dalliance with Gary.' Then he had Cathy, and our set-up became what it was—the four of us living in one house with all of our children.

But before Sampaguita could promote her first album, she left for Australia to marry Lester Harvey, a Kiwi (New Zealander) whom she had met in the restaurant she put up after giving birth to Cowboy.

"I fell in love with Lester Harvey," she says. "*Lagi kong inuuna ang mga lalaki*. I lived with him in Sydney. I thought that all I had to do was record the album. I had to promote it *pala*. But after like three months, Nilo called me up and told me to come home. He told me that I would become a big star in the Philippines. So I left Lester and went with Gary."

His, hers, ours

Back in Manila, Tessy Santos embraced Sampaguita with a passion. At about this time, Nilo had also met Cathy, an American widow, who moved in with Nilo with her daughter. The couple shared the house with Sampaguita and Gary Perez. Their children—Tessy's Dolly and Cowboy with Nilo, and Cathy's daughter--were in one room in the same house.

"Our children slept in one room," she says. "Rock 'n' roll. Everything was very communal."

In 1980, Nilo brought Eric Clapton to perform in Manila. Sampaguita, the British rocker's front act, met Clapton at the airport. In her skin tight jumpsuit and suede boots, Sampaguita was the first thing that Clapton saw. The Slow Hand from UK couldn't resist the fast chick from Manila, and Clapton and Sampaguita ended up spending the night in a Manila hotel.

"It was something I don't regret," says Sam of her date with Clapton. "The details are reserved for the book I would write. He was the only one-night stand I had. It was 'wham, bam, thank you, sir.'"

That was the last time Sampaguita ever saw Clapton. Their one night together almost destroyed the show. Gary Perez, who was still officially Sam's man, was left raging during the rehearsals, threatening not to open Clapton's show. Nilo, the producer, was sweating it out in the background and worrying about his investment. Finally, he called Sampaguita in Clapton's hotel room and ordered her to come home.

"[Nilo] told me, *'Hoy, gitaristà mo, nagwawala. Baka ma*-cancel *ang* show *bukas*. You might get sued if you don't open the show.' He told me not to mess up the show; he would lose a lot of money if it didn't happen. When I saw the business side, I left Clapton and went home."

On the night of the show, the scene on stage and backstage was pure rock and roll chaos. "Gary was screaming at the crowd," Sam narrates. "He was really freaking out. Nilo again warned me not to mess up the show. He told me not to even see Clapton backstage. I was so tense I didn't even look at Clapton when he performed."

Male groupies

For a few more years, Sam and Gary were still a couple, recording at least two albums and creating hits like "Laguna" and "Crazy Tonight," Sam's compromise with the Disco and New Wave trends. "Then we went to 'Gapo in 1982 to make *puwesto* (regular bar stints) and for me to train. I am not really a singer. The triumph came before the training. 'Gapo was where I really became a singer."

In 'Gapo, Sam attracted countless male groupies, most of whom were foreigners. "Gary couldn't handle it," she says. "He was so mad and going crazy with jealousy. I was like, 'What's this?' Nilo was never mad at me. He was not even halfway like Gary was to me?'

"But I was unstoppable. There were lots of cute guys. Then I met Michael Collins, who looked like a movie star, and left Gary for Michael."

When Michael left for the US after a few months, Sampaguita went with Junko, the drummer of the band Hiyas, and was with him for about four years. But like most of her men, Sampaguita split up with Junko.

"Four years...they all lasted four years," she jokes. "Their residential visa is good for only four years."

The Sampaguita streak lasted for about nine years. "I didn't take care of Sampaguita," she says. "I always left her. I would leave her every time I fell in love."

Until Miguel Romero, an advertising and public relations executive came into her life, Sampaguita couldn't settle down with just one man. She has been with Miguel for almost two decades now, and they have a daughter, Jacinta, 17, whom Sampaguita wants to transform into the rock act of the new millennium.

Monster hit

But just when Sampaguita was almost settled into domestic bliss, the monster hit "Nosi Balasi," composed by Henry Cabatino, from her "Beatwave" album from Alpha Records came. "It was a shocker because I was 41, in 1989, when the song was released," she says. "I didn't know I would have a blockbuster. It just happened. I really didn't care about it."

Two years later, Sampaguita recorded another album, "Sa Ngayon," for Viva Records. She also recorded another album with Coritha and Lolit Carbon of Asin, of songs by Freddie Aguilar.

"*Pero, ayoko na* (I didn't want the fame anymore). Motherhood *na*. I already had Jacinta then. I had to clean up my act. No more drug scene. Cowboy also returned here from the US, where Nilo brought him and Dolly. I had to set a good example for him. Domestic bliss *na 'to*."

The daughter of Anita Ledesma of Bacolod and Pete Alfonso, a Dutch-Indon from Java, Indonesia, who owned the Café Indonesia on Roxas Boulevard in the '60s, home of classic jazz singers like Annie Brazil, Sampaguita led the rock 'n' roll lifestyle long before the concept was invented.

Until she was 7, Sampaguita, who had six siblings, lived in Java with her Dutch grandmother in a home that kept her safe from domestic squabbles. But she was forcibly taken from this haven, crying and desperately clinging to the life she had known for seven years, to an airplane that would bring her to Manila where she would grow up to be a rebellious teenager. In Manila, her eldest sister Carmen, mother of former singer Jam Morales, took charge of the younger children.

Sampaguita was kicked out of first year high school from the elitist St. Theresa's College in Manila. "It was my fault," she admits. "We were given a day off from classes after we won the intramurals in kick ball. But I took three days and went to Baguio. The news that reached the school principal was that I eloped. When I came back, the principal, Sister Miguela, told me I had to give up all my positions in school, like being class president and president of the athletic club. The principal said, 'You can't come back to this school if you gave up your positions.' Then I made a dumb comment, 'Who wants to come back to this school, anyway?' She got mad, and I couldn't return to St. Theresa's."

Creeping back

Trouble with the nuns in Malate Catholic School over Sampaguita's bra again led to the girl walking out from that school. "They kept on insisting I was wearing padded bra. They always asked me to remove my bra. But I never wore padded bra. I didn't need pads. I was so irritated that I removed my bra. Then I left and never went back to any other school."

She found herself a job instead, as one of the dancers on "Nine Teeners," precursor of today's teenage TV shows. Earning P80 a week, Sam rented an apartment for P150 a month. At about this time, the 15-year-old Tessy Alfonso met Nilo Santos.

Once in a while, Sampaguita would creep into the life of Tessy Alfonso. Until year 2000, Sampaguita still held her band together. But it disbanded after her drummer Edmund Fortuno and lead guitarist Miyaki died.

Last year, the late Fernando Poe Jr. tapped Sampaguita to record his campaign jingle for the presidential elections. The jingle was a take-off from the classic "Bonggahan." Last December, she also performed in a corporate show as Sampaguita.

So what's keeping Sampaguita from making a big comeback?

"I don't really know," she says. "But I don't want to go back to being Sampaguita and sing songs like 'Bonggahan.' I have always wanted a family. This is what I really like in life. Nilo was really the rocker. To me, rock 'n' roll is now a roach.

"Cowboy is the Sampaguita. Dolly is Tessy Santos. Jacinta is Tessy Alfonso. But who knows? I might want to be Sampaguita again. It's not too late for anything. Nothing's impossible with rock 'n' roll."

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Massive clean-up of old mine sites set

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

TO PUT the shine back in the industry's tarnished image, Malacañang is mounting a massive clean-up of old mine sites and the environmental mess they wrought, starting with the most problematic mines—Marcopper and Maricalum—and the "Dirty Seven" abandoned mines.

Malacañang is also allocating more than P14 billion for a special fund that would ensure environment protection during the entire life of the mine—from the exploration stage to their closure.

"I realized that the government has a long way to go to prove its earnestness and sincerity in cleaning up the abandoned mines and seeing to it that local communities are benefited in a durable way and not hurt by mining," said President Macapagal-Arroyo during a forum in Malacañang where she disclosed her strategy in ensuring that environmental protection go hand-in-hand with mineral exploitation.

"We are gathered here to break away from decades of complacency, obsolete technologies and make directed priorities that have combined to project pestering negative impressions about mining," said the President.

She vowed to protect the environment and tribal communities and signed an executive order that said the environment "shall be the paramount consideration in every stage of the mining operation" and that mining companies would be asked to put in place "progressive rehabilitation measures." The order also said that the rights of "indigenous communities" will be protected.

She stressed that the government has put in place "legal and administrative systems" to safeguard the environment and see to it that tribal communities are properly compensated if their areas fall under exploration.

She said she will also fight for legislation that would compel mining firms to pay directly to local government units in the mining areas part of a two percent tax on mineral extraction.

In a report by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the President has dipped into her social fund to bankroll the US Geological Services-led team exploring options in rehabilitating Marcopper and the ecosystem it destroyed in Marinduque.

The government's goals in Marcopper is to ensure the integrity of its infrastructure such as silt dams and drainage tunnels; neutralize and rehabilitate waste-dump sites to prevent acid generation; clean up remaining tailings in rivers and ensure safe storage, and conduct further study on health concerns.

For Maricalum's mine site in Sipalay, Negros Occidental, the DENR has moved to control the acute dust pollution in the area by drying up the tailings pond and planting it with "talahib," sugar cane cutting and ipil-ipil.

Another target of the government's mining makeover are the mines that have been abandoned after exhausting all their resources. The DENR has identified seven of the worst abandoned mines in the country that it called the Dirty Seven for their "good practices of irresponsible mining."

These are the Basay copper mine in Negros Oriental, Bagacay pyrite mine in Western Samar, Consolidated Mine in Marinduque, Palawan Quick Silver mine in Puerto Princesa, and Thanksgiving gold mine, Boneng-Lobo copper mine and Black Mountain copper mine in Benguet.

In a speech during a dinner with

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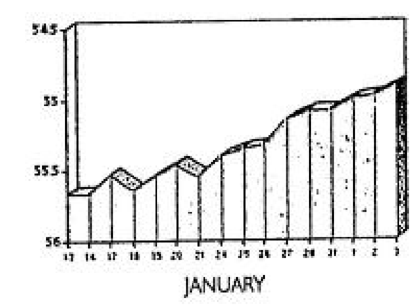

JANUARY

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As of 5 p.m., Feb. 3, 2005

GOLD: $ 420.70-421.20

per ounce Hong Kong, Feb. 3, 2005

STOCK MARKET

Shares close 0.53% higher

SHARE prices closed 0.53 percent higher yesterday as investors bought in again after a relatively modest two-day correction, dealers said.

They said a firmer peso and lower rates on government bonds may have encouraged some investors to put their money into equities at this stage to get higher returns.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index gained 10.57 points to 2,000.22 after trading between 1,989.65 and 2,006.72.

Volume was 1.97 billion shares worth P2.67 billion after 2.97 billion shares worth P1.33 billion on Wednesday.

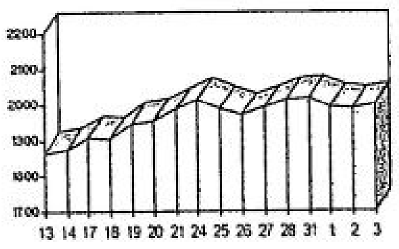
The broader all-shares index was up 11.10 points at 1,175.24.

Gainers beat losers 59 to 44, with 40 stocks unchanged.

"Buying has resumed after that brief two-day pause. Sentiment on the Philippine economy remains upbeat," said Mark Alan Canizares of Citiseconline.com.

He said the peso's rally and the stock market's sharp rise in recent weeks have prompted investors to shift their funds into higher-yielding stocks. *AFP*

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Gov't lauds 'new breed' of mining companies

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT and private sector yesterday lauded the "new breed" of mining firms that are making the country a new investment hot spot even as civil society groups decried the return of what they called the "evils" of mining.

"The government has given us a second chance, we want to do it right," said Benjamin Philip G. Romualdez, president of the Chamber of Mines in the Philippines.

Romualdez said the ongoing international mining conference at the New World Renaissance Hotel gathered "responsible firms who believe in corporate social responsibility and who could not get funding for the projects" if these would be destructive to the natural environment.

Outside the hotel, multi-sectoral groups including organizations of indigenous peoples rallied against the expected heightening of mining activities in the country.

They carried banners that exhorted people to "stop the foreign plunder of Philippine resources" and condemned the Mining Act of 1995 for sponsoring profit for the rich while spawning "poison and disasters for the poor."

But Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri told the mining forum that a revitalized and responsible local mining industry would bring factors that could help the government address critical financial issues.

"(This would result in) increased tax revenues, reduction of credit risk perceptions and improvement of credit rating, increased export revenues and foreign exchange reserves and would help strengthen the peso," Neri said.

The director general of the National Economic and Development Authority defined responsible mining as being environmentally sustainable; ensuring that all stakeholders including local communities were consulted; and abiding to the principle of equal sharing of benefits.

Outgoing Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima also assured conference delegates that the government would continue to be supportive of the industry and was prepared to grant incentives for new projects.

"But please don't abuse us, everything must be in a win-win (framework)," Purisima said.

Some 150 mining firms, consultancy companies and fund providers from nine countries are attending the three-day conference which ends today.

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Globe Telecom earmarks P8.8B for shares buyback program

By Clarissa S. Batino

GLOBE Telecom Inc. will shell out P8.8 billion to buy back a total of 9.3 million shares that it intends to retire, along with the 12 million treasury shares it earlier acquired from Deutsche Telekom Asia.

The bulk of the amount, equivalent to P7 billion, will likely go to its two major stockholders—Ayala Corp. and Singapore Telecom International Pte. Ltd., which have expressed interest to participate in the tender offer. Globe will likely be buying back 7.4 million shares from Ayala and SingTel.

Ayala Corp. holds 48.9 million common shares of Globe equivalent to 35 percent of total common shares, while SingTel has 63.03 million shares equivalent to a 45-percent stake in the phone company.

The remaining 20 percent of Globe's common stocks or some 27.96 million shares are publicly held.

Subscribing to Globe's offer to buy one share for every 15 shares held will allow Ayala Corp. to dispose of 3.26 million shares that would give it P3.09 billion in proceeds. SingTel could sell to Globe 4.2 million shares worth almost P4 billion.

The shares buyback program is deemed by analysts as a move to pay back Globe shareholders and to prop up the company's share prices.

Globe's net income grew by 9.7 percent to P11.3 billion in 2004 from P10.3 billion in 2003. Last year's income growth rate was the slowest posted by the company since 1998.

Sources said prospects this year were not so good as the tax breaks Globe was enjoying for its earlier network investments were due to expire in March. As a result, Globe's average tax payment will likely increase to 29 percent from 18 percent in 2004.

To post a higher profit growth this year, the company will have to earn much more to cover the higher tax rate, officials said. Analysts are looking at a P14-billion net income for Globe this year.

Globe president Gerardo Ablaza explained that the company did not do poorly in 2004. He said the company had been investing heavily in infrastructure and the rate of investment had outpaced the growth in revenue.

This year, Globe will spend P17 billion to expand its network.

He also explained that the company had to set aside a huge amount for depreciation of assets as investments grew 41 percent last year.

Globe chief financial officer Delfin Gonzalez admitted that there were some "bad breaks" last year that led to a lower subscriber take-up especially during the last stretch of 2004.

"We are working to reverse that trend. We want to narrow the gap," said Gonzalez.

Ablaza said Globe and its other brand, Touch Mobile, might have been affected by the aggressive pricing of Sun Cellular's 24/7 plan.

He said the competitor's strategy might have hit Globe's bid to tap the second-phone market more aggressively.

Ablaza said the company would be investing more resources to court subscribers this year but the strategy would have to be more direct.

"We want to target subscribers who will stay with us."

Foreign investors oversubscribe Semirara shares

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

FOREIGN investors scrambled for shares offered by Semirara Mining Corp., the country's largest coal producer, with orders outstripping supply by nine times.

Semirara said in a statement that the bulk of the institutional investors that oversubscribed to its international stock offer came from Asia, Europe and the United States.

The shares were sold at P36.106 each, and the international offer brought in $59 million, or some P3.2 billion, in proceeds.

Some 89.87 million Semirara shares were sold abroad, while another 15.18 million shares went to the local market, the company said.

Construction firm DMCI Holdings, Semirara's mother company, raised roughly P2 billion from the offering.

It sold 42.991 million of its Semirara shares to international investors and 15.18 million shares to local buyers, bringing down its equity in the coal company to 66 percent from 94 percent.

Semirara, on the other hand, raised roughly P1.6 billion after it sold 46.875 million new shares.

It will use the proceeds to bankroll expansion programs and reduce debt this year.

New VAT, new Customs commissioner

By Ernesto M. Ordonez

COMMENTARY

WHAT, you may ask, do the value-added tax (VAT) and the Customs commissioner have in common? Plenty.

Though there have been some good Customs commissioners, the majority have not been able to stop the rampant smuggling that deprived our government of much needed revenue. This is forcing us to make up for it by paying a higher VAT.

The 2-percentage-point VAT increase is obviously undesirable. This is because, in relative terms, it taxes the poor more than the rich.

Though it is believed to be the lesser evil compared to a full blown fiscal crisis, why must we always settle for the lesser evil? Why don't we finally shape up and allow our citizens to choose the better of two blessings rather than the lesser of two evils?

This is where incoming Customs Commissioner Albert Lina will be put to the test.

P84B versus P37B

Let us compare the benefit derived from the additional VAT and that derived from curbing smuggling. According to the Public Finance Institute, the estimated revenue from the increased VAT amounts to P37 billion. By controlling smuggling, the additional revenue to the government was estimated at P84 billion.

Here is why. There is a difference of approximately P10 billion yearly between the reported value of exports to the Philippines by our trading partners and the amount of imports reported by the Bureau of Customs. If we assume that our trading partners are giving us accurate numbers, then the $10 billion is the amount of smuggling (both outright and technical) that is going on.

At 10-percent VAT and the assumed 5 percent average tariff rate, the government is losing some $1.5 billion from smuggling, or approximately P84 billion.

"Since smuggling is more than two times the P37-billion benefit arising from the additional 2-percent VAT, why not address smuggling rather than impose the additional VAT?" many argue.

"The added VAT hurts the poor more than the rich, while curbing smuggling punishes the unscrupulous rich and helps the unemployed poor. If there were less smuggling, fewer jobs would be lost. More job opportunities could be created to lessen our poverty."

Anti-smuggling drive

You would think that the government would therefore launch a concerted, intensive drive against smuggling. For a while, it did. From March to August last year, three anti-smuggling forces were created.

But after just six months of unsurpassed anti-smuggling success under the leadership of DILG Secretary Angelo Reyes, and the active involvement of agriculture and industry leaders, all three anti-smuggling forces were abolished.

"That's because these forces were too successful, and some powerful people were feeling the heat," the more cynical said.

Fortunately, after much private sector pressure and the Alyansa Agrikultura's document presentation at Senate hearings showing increased agricultural smuggling after the anti-smuggling bodies' abolition, the government restored these bodies in December last year.

At the first meeting of the newly restored Cabinet Oversight Committee on Anti-Smuggling (COCAS), the Alyansa Agrikultura proposed that importers caught with smuggled goods should have their licenses immediately cancelled, or at least temporarily suspended.

The BOC commissioner said he could exercise his prerogative to immediately suspend, but not necessarily cancel, the licenses of importers proven to have brought in goods illegally. But hardly any action has taken place since then.

An example

Take the case of the submission of a list of unscrupulous importers submitted by an Alyansa Agrikultura member, the Katipunan ng mga Samahang Magisisibuyas ng Nueva Ecija (KASAMNE).

Frustrated with the BOC inaction on these importers, KASAMNE submitted to Sen. Aquilino Pimentel and the Senate a list of 17 names. Two had four violations; one had three; four had two; and 10 had one.

The KASAMNE leaders, however, still see these importers continuing their nefarious activities. They ask: "Couldn't the BOC at least have temporarily suspended those who had violated the law more than two times in one year?"

Last December, BOC Commissioner George Jereos told Secretary Reyes that the BOC would immediately suspend those who brought in illegally imported goods. But in the two COCAS meetings of Jan. 11 and 25, no proof was given that this was done.

Secretary Reyes has done a very commendable job in anti-smuggling. But since he has no direct line authority over BOC, it is still up to the BOC commissioner to take the necessary action on suspension.

To act or not

Will incoming Commissioner Albert Lina take this action? If he does not, the smugglers will continue making a mockery out of government and deprive us of more than P80 billion annually.

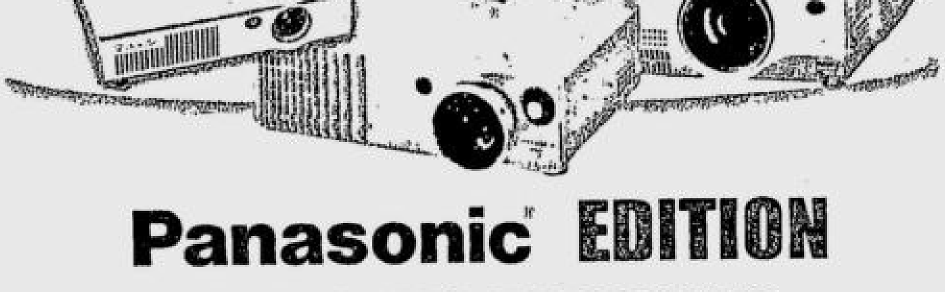
A number of frustrated farmers have already joined the armed struggle, partly because these people see no government sincerity in the campaign against smuggling. This not only deprives the government of revenue, but also deprives these farmers of their livelihood.

The KASAMNE, the Alyansa Agrikultura, and the rest of the nation await the incoming commissioner's action on this matter. They want to know if they will once again be forced to choose a lesser evil by paying an even higher VAT.

A good deal

For a contribution of only P500 to help small farmers and fisherfolk, you can celebrate, listen, and dance on Valentine's Day to the rock (and romantic) '70s music of two-time Aliw awardee, Spirit of '67. This Agriwatch Benefit Dance Concert, which includes one free drink and free-flowing peanuts, starts at 8 p.m. at the Philippine Trade Training Center on Roxas Boulevard. For more information, please call 832-2112.

(The author is the chair of Agriwatch; a private sector initiative; former Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects, and former undersecretary for agriculture, and trade and industry. For inquiries and suggestions, email agriwatchphil @yahoo.com or telefax 8516635)



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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of February 3, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	13,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	30	30	30	30	1,163,500
Bank of the Phil. Islands	57.5	57.5	56.5	56.5	1,059,700
China Banking Corp.	580	585	580	580	580
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	47	47	46.5	46.5	68,600
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46	20,000
International Exch. Bank	18.25	18.25	18.25	18.25	100,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	31.5	32.5	31.5	32.5	1,473,800
Philippine National Bank	27.5	27.5	27	27	30,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.5	7,900
Security Bank Corp.	31	31	30.5	30.5	102,300
Union Bank of the Phil.	29.5	30	29.5	29.5	22,000
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2	2	2	2	24,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2400	2420	2400	2420	100
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2	2	1.98	1.98	2,801,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	124	124	122	122	300
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1780	1780	1775	1775	1,310
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	17.5	17.5	17.25	17.25	29,100
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.68	1.7	1.64	1.64	19,227,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	940	945	940	945	121,170
Ipeople Inc.	4.3	4.3	4.25	4.3	306,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.05	0.0525	0.05	0.0525	2,500,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.039	0.039	0.038	0.038	3,700,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.26	2.26	2.26	2.26	15,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.85	3.95	3.85	3.95	9,294,000
Transpacific Broadcast	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	40,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1405	1405	1385	1395	269,460
Ivantage Corp.	0.65	0.66	0.65	0.66	690,000
Philweb Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	2,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	17	17.25	17	17.25	51,800
Manila Electric Co. B	26	26	25.5	26	1,195,700
Petron Corp.	3.95	3.95	3.85	3.85	6,139,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.6	1.74	1.58	1.7	2,680,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.8	1.82	1.8	1.82	1,192,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	7.3	7.4	7.3	7.3	136,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	20,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.44	0.44	0.42	0.42	1,130,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.4	4.55	4.4	4.4	7,740,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.12	124,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	428,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	30.5	31	30.5	31	1,558,300
Jollibee Foods Corp.	26.5	26.5	26	26	188,800
Pancake House Inc.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	5,000
RFM Corp.	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	100,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	20,000
San Miguel Corp. A	57.5	57.5	57.5	57.5	26,700
San Miguel Corp. B	77	77	76	76.5	37,200
Universal Robina Corp.	9.6	9.8	9.6	9.8	261,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	500,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.008	0.0085	0.008	0.0085	93,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.008	0.0085	0.008	0.0085	4,000,000
Ayala Corp.	7.8	7.9	7.7	7.7	10,018,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.9	1.14	0.9	0.96	36,590,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.75	3.85	3.75	3.85	619,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11	11	11	11	5,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	1,700,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.94	1.94	1.9	1.9	1,073,000
APC Group Inc.	0.42	0.48	0.4	0.4	13,320,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.009	0.009	0.0085	0.0085	31,000,000
Aries Prime Res. Inc.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	10,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.76	1.76	1.76	1.76	10,000
ATN Holdings Inc. B	1.76	1.76	1.76	1.76	1,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	45,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.87	0.87	0.87	0.87	10,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	20	20	20	20	1,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	60,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.02	1.08	1.02	1.06	13,128,000
A Brown Co. Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	60,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.22	0.23	0.22	0.225	310,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	30,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.4	0.44	0.4	0.42	23,630,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	5.6	5.9	5.6	5.8	6,929,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.037	0.038	0.037	0.037	18,700,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.16	1.18	1.16	1.18	321,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	9	9	8.9	9	344,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	41	43.5	41	43.5	3,340,900
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	450,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.0875	0.0875	0.0875	0.0875	6,000,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.2	1.28	1.2	1.28	862,000
Ionics Inc.	1.68	1.82	1.68	1.8	1,111,000
J.G Summit Holdings Inc.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	882,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.4	2.42	2.4	2.4	169,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	2,000,000
Megaworld Corp	1.5	1.54	1.48	1.52	4,526,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	0.61	1.48	0.61	1.48	20,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.3	0.3	600,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.51	0.52	0.5	0.51	22,150,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.27	0.27	3,150,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.28	1.28	1.26	1.26	125,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.14	600,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	200,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.24	0.245	0.24	0.24	3,080,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Corro-Coat Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	36,000
Interphil Labs Inc. A	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	19,000
Interphil Labs Inc. B	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	138,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.76	1.88	1.76	1.86	384,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.92	80,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.09	0.0975	0.09	0.09	7,600,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	600,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.67	0.68	0.67	0.67	2,700,00
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.08	1.08	780,00
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.58	0.58	0.56	0.58	120,00
Manila Jockey Club	3	3	3	3	30,00
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	380,00
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.3	9.5	9.2	9.3	125,280,00
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	30,00
Cityland Development Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	708,00
Cebu Holdings Inc	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.68	170,00
C&P Homes Inc	0.31	0.34	0.3	0.34	15,860,00
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.18	0.19	0.175	0.18	8,820,00
Empire East Land Inc.	0.42	0.46	0.42	0.45	67,790,00
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.48	1.54	1.48	1.54	3,416,00
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	20,00
MRC Allied Ind. Inc	0.21	0.21	0.15	0.2	480,00
Primex Corp.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	30,00
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	35,00
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.22	0.225	0.2	0.225	1,640,00
SM Development Corp.	1.74	1.82	1.66	1.66	3,579,00
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.4	8.4	8.4	8.4	6,379,00
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.95	0.95	0.93	0.93	100,00
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	0.95	1.02	0.95	1	220,00
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.015	0.015	0.014	0.014	61,800,00
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	8	8	7.7	7.9	657,00
Benguet Corp. A	9.5	9.5	9.4	9.5	99,00
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	12,00
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.43	0.44	0.41	0.42	15,770,00
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.5	0.51	0.5	0.5	43,610,00
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.025	369,900,00
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.035	0.036	0.035	0.036	563,400,00
Omico Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.0055	0.0055	56,000,00
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.26	1.28	1.2	1.2	6,550,00
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.62	1.64	1.58	1.6	15,468,00
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	370,00
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.013	0.013	0.012	0.012	4,000,00
Interport Res. B	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	25,000,00
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	88,000,00
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	300,00
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	410,00
Pacifica	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	12,800,00
Sinophil Corp.	0.11	0.12	0.105	0.105	21,510,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.38	0.4	0.38	0.4	700,00

CURRENCIES

February 3, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.767224	1.000000	54.9760
Japan	Yen	0.007406	0.009653	0.530
United Kingdom	Pound	1.447215	1.886300	103.701
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.098370	0.128215	7.04
Switzerland	Franc	0.643536	0.838785	46.1130
Canada	Dollar	0.620029	0.808146	44.4286
Singapore	Dollar	0.469250	0.611621	33.6245
Australia	Dollar	0.594056	0.774293	42.5675
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.035131	2.652590	145.8288
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.204593	0.266667	14.6603
Brunei	Dollar	0.467820	0.609756	33.5219
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000109	0.0060
Thailand	Baht	0.019956	0.026011	1.4300
UAE	Dirham	0.208922	0.272309	14.9705
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.303400	71.6557
India	Rupee	0.017723	0.023100	1.2699
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.201928	0.263193	14.4693
Mexico	New Peso	0.068878	0.089775	4.9355
New Zealand	Dollar	0.545951	0.711592	39.1205
Korea	Won	0.000747	0.000973	0.0535
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024207	0.031551	1.7345
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000400	0.000522	0.028

Massive clean-up of old mine sites set

From page B1

local and foreign mining executives, the President said: "Abandoned mines have always been an emotional issue for communities and a rallying cause for the industry's critics. We are addressing this issue now and we shall not repeat the dire lessons of the past."

The DENR is planning to compel the mine operators to develop or rehabilitate these areas starting this year. Since Basay and Bagacay are under the portfolio of the state's Privatization Management Office (PMO), the DENR hopes to make them showcases of its rehabilitation efforts.

To prevent a repeat of the abandonment of mines, the DENR would require all mining firms to submit a mine decommissioning plan five years before expected closure that will include putting up a kitty that would take care of the monitoring and maintenance of the former site for 10 years after closure.

The DENR has likewise disclosed its plan to establish a contingent and liability fund worth P14.3 billion that would ensure compliance with environmental protection rules throughout the productive life of the mine. The fund would be used for reforestation, slope stabilization, control of waste dumps, developing watershed areas, and water conservation projects.

In her dinner speech, the President said she expected local and foreign mining executives to provide "proactive contributions to ecological conservation."

"Winning the hearts and minds is the first step," the President said.

The President cited the need to have a "national mining consensus" as environmental activists have stepped up their opposition against the administration's efforts to resuscitate the mining industry after the Supreme Court ruled that foreigners could exploit the country's resources.

Piltel wants NTC to stop Sun's 24/7

By Clarissa S. Batino

PILIPINO Telephone Corp., a unit of Smart Communications Inc., is urging the National Telecommunications Commission to stop the Gokongwei-owned Sun Cellular from offering its unlimited 24/7 plan.

In its letter to the NTC, the company claimed that Piltel's rehabilitation was "under grave threat and peril due to the unwarranted action of Digitel in importing rates arbitrarily."

Listed Piltel is seen to have posted a net profit of more than P7 billion in 2004, and is looking to book at least P3 billion in net income this year. Its Talk 'N Text counted 4.2 million subscribers as of end-September.

Sun Cellular is the trade name of Digitel Mobile Philippines Inc., a unit of listed Digital Telecommunications Phils. Inc., which continues to stay in the red. Sun Cellular has more than 1.1 million subscribers as of end-2004.

Piltel accused Digitel of "unilaterally" imposing a new rate scheme without NTC approval.

Piltel asked the commission to issue a cease and desist order against Digitel's 24/7, claiming the plan constituted predatory pricing. It also urged the regulator to impose sanctions against Digitel for violating due process.

But according to William Pamintuan, Digitel senior vice president, Sun Cellular is not "engaging in predatory pricing since it is not a dominant player in the cellular industry."

"Smart and Globe are the two dominant cellular firms with more than 95 percent of the market," Pamintuan said.

Sun Cellular controls less than 5 percent of the wireless market, he added.

Digitel's 24/7 Plan, according to Piltel, is destroying "the fundamental or basic market pricing considerations when it has priced its service at a level where no new market entrants in the cellular market can still compete, and that any losses Digitel may incur at the moment may be recovered later on when it has severely weakened its competitors and successfully driven them out of the market."

Piltel said that Digitel was charging a wholesale rate of P4.50 per minute, while its own subscribers have unlimited access for P250 a month or P100 for 10 days.

"Piltel by itself is charging its subscribers an average retail [rate of] P5.50 per minute and has not embarked on an atrocious wholesale pricing scheme," said the Smart subsidiary.

The Commission said it would study all telecom wireless and fixed-line pricing schemes following the unresolved issue on whether major players have engaged in predatory landline pricing at the expense of smaller operators.

NTC chair Ronald Solis said that while the Commission supports the lowering of telecom rates to benefit the public, it must also guard against ruinous competition that would prevent smaller players from operating.

Goodbye, Revo

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

IT HAS expanded the local definition of taxi to include "FX," broken the stranglehold of jeepneys on commuters and national politics, provided airconditioned-riding comfort to students and employees who otherwise could not afford taxis, and given OFWs not only their first vehicles but people-hauling business as well.

We are referring to the Tamaraw and its various iterations FX and Revo which, after a 13-year run and nearly 141,000 units later, Toyota Motor Philippines has stopped assembling.

Toyota's Bicutan plant rolled out the last of the Revos before the annual Christmas shutdown and, as of early this week, only had about 60 units left unsold. Toyota marketing first vice president Daniel Isla is confident that, with aggressive in-house financing, this last batch should be disposed of by Feb. 14 when Toyota launches Revo's replacement, the better-appointed, quieter-engined Innova.

From its October 1991 introduction, the Tamaraw/Revo quickly displaced the jeepneys as king of the road and, together with the light rail transit system, broke the back of the leftwing-dominated jeepney lobby. What Malacañang could not achieve, technology quietly did.

But improved technology has also spelled the end even for the new king. And with the excise tax cover and the "10-cheater rule" gone, Revo and the rest of the Asian utility vehicles had lost their tax and price advantages.

It was simply cheaper to develop and produce a globally accepted vehicle such as Innova rather a region-specific workhorse like the Revo.

The good news is that Innova, despite its car-like cabin features, is still priced within the Revo range, the P800,000-range, although the unabated rise in the price of steel is worrying Toyota's numbers crunchers.

And for the daily commuters, the Innova should spell instant relief, as the new people mover only has eight real seats, not the dwarfish "ten" of the AUVs.

BMW puzzler

THE BMW head office has just announced a worldwide nine-percent price reduction for its new 2005 series 3 models.

According to the grapevine, the good news has given the Philippine distributor and dealers a headache, since the Philippines still has a considerable inventory of the previous 3 models, which BMW is now trying to dispose of through easy financing terms.

It is not clear whether the surprise HQ announcement had something to do with it, but BMW dealer Prestige Motors cancelled a scheduled press conference Wednesday at the Mandarin.

The Wednesday lunch affair was supposed to have been a press preview of the revised, top-of-the-line 7 series model.

Money-go-round

- IBANK CEO Ramon Siy and retired ABS-CBN president Federico Garcia, both Caviteños, have joined the board of the recapitalized Coastal Road Corp. that would be undertaking a $60-million extension of the Cavite coastal road. The project should not only perk up jobs and consumption in the province, but it should also boost the real estate market and de-clog the hellish traffic along the coastal towns.
- The Shang Grand Tower, the luxury condominium project of the Kuoks in Legaspi Village that has no less than the Tantocos of Rustans as celebrity endorsers/residents, has scheduled a topping-off ceremony this Sunday. The bullish Shang president Tomas Zita Jr. has committed a turnover of the lower floors as early as mid-year, way ahead of the yearend 2005 target.

Heard through the grapevine

THERE is intense lobbying within the powerful listing committee of the Philippine Stock Exchange to space the public listing of two potential blockbusters, Ayala's Manila Water and Henry Sy's SM Investments.

Manila Water's listing has been scheduled for March 17 while SM Investments has been set for March 22.

March 22, incidentally, is already Holy Tuesday, when there is traditionally hardly any trading.

Apparently, what some of the few cash-short PSE brokers want is additional time to churn their expected windfall from Manila Water's P4.15-billion offering and then bet their respective houses on the P17-billion SM Investments offering.

(Email cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

California firm acquires RP call center for ₱200M

By Ronnel W. Domingo

A CALIFORNIA-BASED customer service management company yesterday announced the acquisition of a call center in the Philippines, investing P200 million in the two-year-old local firm.

The announcement came as an industry report issued last Tuesday showed that the local contact center industry was expected to grow between 50 percent and 70 percent this year.

According to the report, demand would outstrip available workers, office space and information technology infrastructure.

The projected growth rate range is significantly lower than the average growth rate of 128 percent the industry has achieved over the past four years.

Yesterday, Alorica Philippines president Paul Santos said the acquisition in October 2004 has resulted in the expansion of the firm to 400 seats from 100 seats.

Santos said the company—formerly known as Global Outsourcing Ventures—could now handle over a million inbound computer service calls a month.

Last Tuesday, Liza Caudal, director for strategic growth programs at PeopleSupport, told government and industry officials during an industry forum that the contact center sector continued to be a bright spot in the country's economy.

Caudal said the sector, which had created a total of at least 60,000 jobs as of end-2004, had yielded revenues estimated at $750 million a year.

PRULINK	PRU LIFE U.K.	
Investments of Variable Life Insurance Contracts	Current Week February 01, 2005	Last Week January 25, 2005
Bond Fund - Peso	1.20921	1.19160
Managed Fund - Peso	1.32431	1.30586
Bond Fund - US Dollar	1.0892	1.0841

* Note: These investments of variable life insurance contracts are not mutual funds. Life insurance products are regulated by the Insurance Commissior

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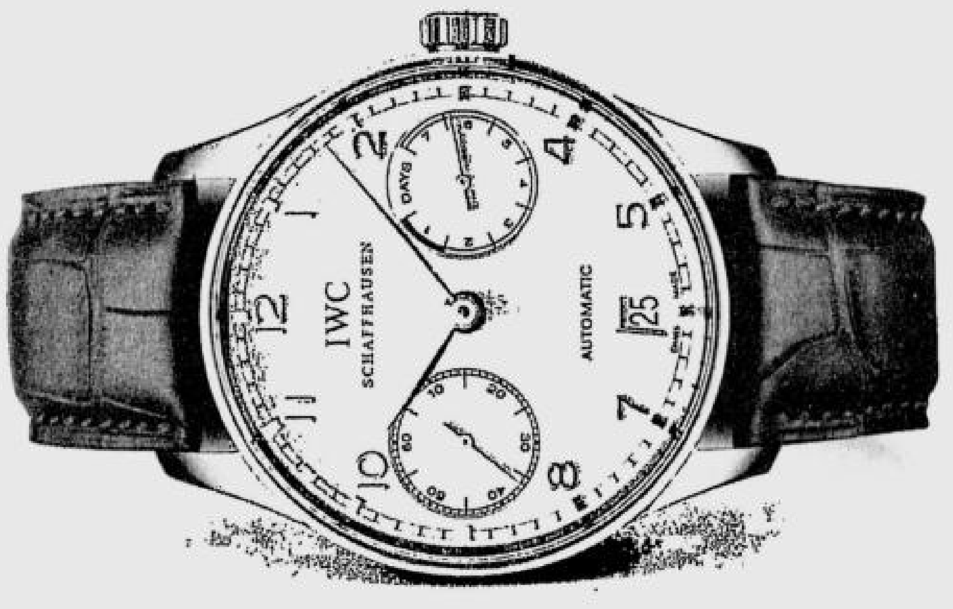

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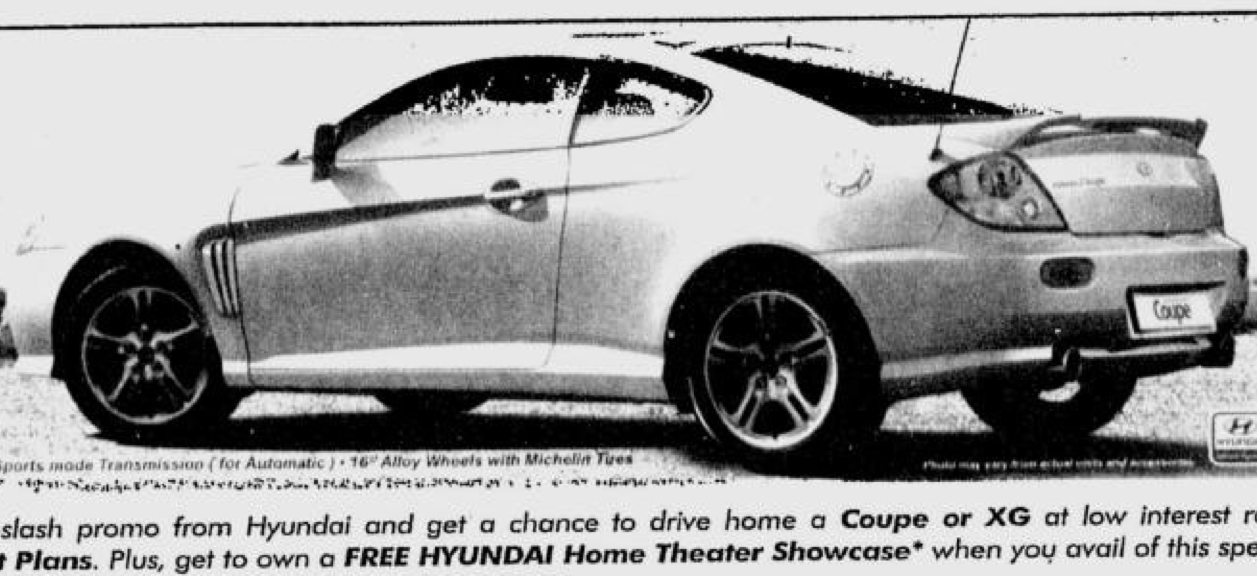
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Editor Aries Espinosa

Schools get set for AMA IT Olympiad

QUALIFIED secondary schools nationwide are now preparing for the regional level competition in this year's AMA IT Olympiad, an annual inter-school information technology quiz event of AMA Education System.

Now on its 4th successful year, the AMA IT Olympiad is open to all 4th year high school students. To qualify, each school will have to form a team of three students and intellectually compete with other schools.

Organized by AMA Foundation Inc, the AMA IT Olympiad is a welcome initiative to discover and give recognition to budding information technology talents for their outstanding achievements.

"This competition is to tap the interest and hone the potentials of the Filipino youth in the field of information and communications technology where both local and global demand is greatest today," said Amable C. Aguiluz IX, president of the foundation.

According to Aguiluz IX, the regional level competition is now happening in various campuses of AMA nationwide, while the championship level is scheduled on March 4 at Hotel Rembrandt in Quezon City.

As the AMA IT Olympiad National Champion, each team member will receive P25,000 in cash and a full scholarship grant at the AMA Computer University. Their coach will receive P30,000 while the school will be the beneficiary of P100,000 and a trophy.

First runner-up will likewise receive cash prizes and trophies. Each team member in second place will get P20,000, their coach P25,000, and the school P75,000.

Second runner-up will receive P15,000 per team member, the coach P15,000 while the school they represent will get P50,000.

All 14 teams, representing Regions 1 to 12, NCR North and NCR South, are all considered winners with cash prizes for each team members and their coaches. "The regional finalists are also provided an all-expense paid travel to Quezon City and hotel accommodations while competing in the national level." Aguiluz IX said.

Last year, St. Stephen High School of Sta. Cruz, Manila, representing NCR-North, emerged as the national champion. The Philippine Science High School of Davao and St. Joseph's Academy of Las Pinas landed 1st and 2nd places, respectively.

AVON'S GRAND DEALERS' DAY A GRAND SUCCESS

Global beauty company Avon became a virtual mecca to thousands of Avon Ladies who flocked to its 143 outlets nationwide and participated in the Avon Grand Dealer's Day celebrations. Avon's franchise dealers were given royal treatment for a day as they were treated during their visits to special giveaways, fun games and activities and exciting discounts and offers on best selling Avon products. Joining them in the celebrations were popular TV and movie personality and Avon's newest fragrance spokesperson Iza Calzado and Miss World 2004 finalist Ma. Karla Bautista. Avon's Grand Dealer's Day is one of the special events lined up for this year, which Avon has declared and dedicated as Year of the Avon Ladies. Shown is Ms Bautista (4th from left) with Avon executives Rochelle Dalton and Trini Ynares, and Avon's top franchise dealers during her visit to the Taft branch.

Alsons Aqua nets 2004 Golden Shell Presidential Citation

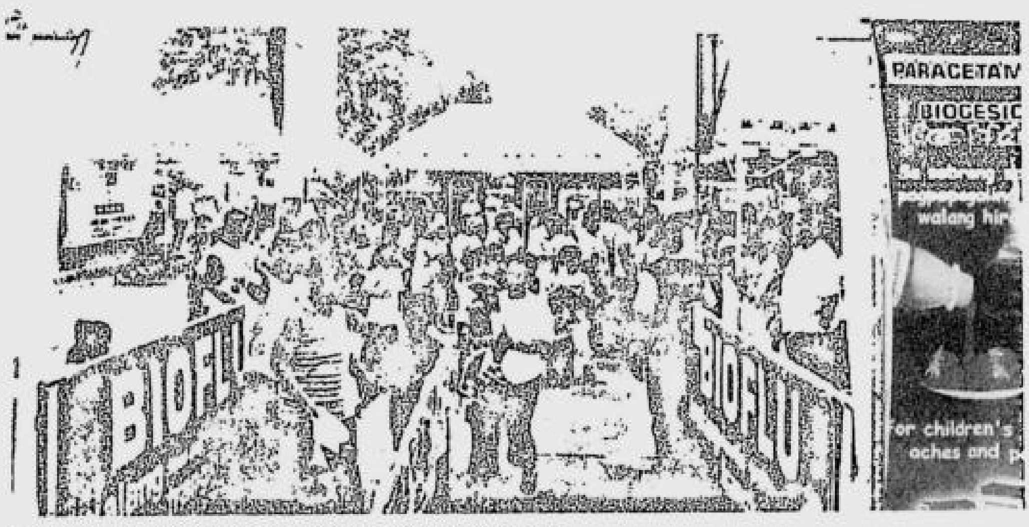
ALSONS Aquaculture Corp (AAC), the country's only integrated farm-to-market bangus producer, has landed the most prestigious export award in the country, the 2004 Golden Shell Presidential Citation. The award was presented by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to Alex I. Alcantara, executive vice president and COO of AAC.

The award was given to AAC in recognition of its having attained the highest ratings for excellence in design, manufacturing and marketing for its Sarangani Bay premium bangus brand. Known here and abroad for its succulent taste and freshness, Sarangani Bay bangus is a product of the most comprehensive and stringent production and processing systems.

Sarangani Bay premium bangus are grown in over 300 ha of ponds in the pristine waters of Sarangani Bay in Alabel, Sarangani Province in Southern Mindanao. All freshly harvested bangus are immediately processed at AAC's processing plant on-site, which assures customers that Sarangani Bay products are always packed at its freshest best.

Sarangani Bay has the widest variety of bangus offerings for its customers' diverse tastes and preferences: Whole Bangus; Whole Gutted, Split; Whole Gutted, Gilled, Descaled; Whole Gutted, Descaled, Sliced; Whole Deboned Plain; Whole Deboned marinated (Classic, Bistek, Adobo); Bangus Belly and Rellenong Bangus. Bottled milkfish in corn oil is also a new variant targeted to compete in the bottled sardine market.

Sarangani Bay bangus is exported to the United States, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Micronesia. Sarangani Bay bangus products are produced in the country's only ISO 9001-2000 certified commercial fish plant in the country, and meets international food processing standards with HAACP and GMP certifications.



BIOGESIC MED MISSION GOES TO CEBU

More than 2,000 patients received free medical consultation and medicines from the Biogesic Alagang Barangay Medical Mission in SM Cebu Jan. 9. This medical mission, sponsored by the consumer health group of United Laboratories Inc (Unilab), is the first run of more than 100 med missions scheduled this year in selected cities in the country. The Cebu run was conducted in cooperation with Rose Pharmacy, Cebu City Doctors and the Office of the City Vice Mayor.

Bits & Clips

Singapore Tourism Board in tourism expo

SINGAPORE Tourism Board-Philippines joins the Philippines' grandest tourism event, the 12th TravelTour Expo 2005 slated from Feb. 4 to 6. The three-day event, which will be held at Megatrade Halls 1, 2 and 3 of SM Megamall, is organized by the Philippine Travel Agencies Association (PTAA), which aims to promote inbound and outbound tourism in the country. This year's theme, "The Power of Travel", could not be more apt for the event. With over 300 booths, guests may expect the best travel offers from various travel agencies, tour operators, cruises, airlines, hotels, resorts and national tourism offices. Exciting prizes await those who qualify to play the Pachinko at the STB-P booth (B16 to B18, International Pavilion). For more information on the latest events and attractions in Singapore, drop by the STB-P booth B16 to B18, or call 813-0946.

Eastwood celebrates the rooster

EASTWOOD City, the country's premier urban center, ushers in the Year of the Rooster with a 2-week celebration marked with colorful traditions and thanksgiving. The Eastwood City Psychic Fair at the City Walk II, from Feb. 4 to 9, gathers some of the country's most trusted and intuitive clairvoyants to tell you whether the year will have something for you to crow about. On Feb. 9, Eastwood City celebrates Chinese New Year in style, with a one-of-a-kind kiddie Dragon Dance Exhibition around Central Plaza, Fuente Circle and City Walk II. Come 9 p.m. Feast your eyes on a fantastic display of fireworks as it lights up the skies above Eastwood City with a kaleidoscope of colors, heralding the onset of the Year of the Rooster.

Philippine-German month

THE PHILIPPINE-German Month 2005 opens in "Paco Park Presents" today, Feb. 4 at 6 p.m. with violinist Gina Medina and pianist Allan de la Cruz taking center stage in a program of Filipino and German music. Hosting this yearly celebration at Paco Park, which is brought to the public for free by the National Parks Development Committee, under executive director Carlito A. Fajardo, and the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, is Thea Perez. Admission to "Paco Park Presents" Philippine-German month is free. The public is invited.

Market! Market!

Photo winners

WINNERS in the Market! Market! photo contest on the theme "Lens Best Finds in Market! Market!" were presented their prizes Nov. 27 at the Activity Center of Market! Market! in Bonifacio Global City. Winners were Jamie Bibat, first prize, Jojo Sales, 2nd prize, and Orly Punzalan, 3rd prize. Consolation prize winners were Dewey Sergio, Gigi Paler, Bless Tan, Alexander Marquez, and Boyet Guevarra. The on-the-spot contest was held Nov. 13 and 14. The FPPF is inviting photographers to attend the Photoworld Manila 2005 seminars to be held from Feb. 4 to 7 at the Asian Institute of Management in Makati City, where lecturers are topnotch local and foreign photographers. For details, call FPPF at 843-5341 or 813-7420.

Araullo HS general assembly

THE ARAULLO High School Alumni General Assembly is set for Saturday, Feb. 19. All members of Batch '71 are invited to the Araullo High School grounds starting 2 p.m. The alumni look forward to meeting classmates and friends, and catching up on the old times.

HSBC EDPPI NEARS COMPLETION

Topping-off ceremonies were held in Northgate Cyberzone, for HSBC EDPPI five-story building with a gross floor area of 22,000 square meters. The building is the 8th Group Service Center in Asia of the UK based HSBC Group. It is expected to be completed by mid-2005 and will house a 2,000 seat call center and business process outsourcing for its global operations. HSBC EDPPI was constructed in a build-to-suit arrangement between HSBC EDPPI and Cyberzone Properties, Inc developer and facilities provider of Northgate Cyberzone IT Park located in Filinvest Corporate City in Alabang. Present during the event are, (from left) : HSBC head of Global Group Resourcing Rob Muth; Filinvest Alabang Inc first vice president Ieyo de Guzman; HSBC Global Resourcing East Asia COO Susie Babani; Filinvest Alabang Inc executive vice president Josephine Gotianun Yap; HSBC EDPPI president David Sutton; and R. Villarosa Architects Partner & Associates managing partner Roger Villarosa

ProductFILES

Happy 'Feet'-ines Day

THE 'CHRISTMAS of the Hearts' fever is on, and if you're thinking of a gift for your loved ones, they will surely love the heart-designed Happy Feet sandals.

This footwear known as the Happy Feet Marissa Hand-Painted is backed by long-standing tradition of quality detailing. A 1.5-inch wooden orthopedic sandal features real leather strap. Its wooden footbed has been hand-painted in heart design to be attuned to the season that will surely be an eye catcher.Happy Feet is now available at SM branches (Makati, Megamall, North Edsa, Centerpoint, Manila, San Fernando and Batangas), Landmark, Health Express outlets, Nailspa, Cinderella, Beauty Bar and 158 Designer's Boulevard. The happy soles can also be found in Davao, Cagayan de Oro, Bacolod and Pampanga. For more information, call Happy Feet at 725-2675 or telefax 723-5105. Log on to www.happyfeetsandals.com, or e-mail queries@happyfeetsandals.com.

Anson Emporium's Appliance Installment Showdown

Once again, due to customers' demands, Anson Emporium will hold its appliance exhibit at the Alabang Town Center Activity Area from Feb. 28 to March 15. Enjoy the comfort of owning cool items at prices to fit your budget. There's zero Interest on your installment, as well as reduced interest rates and big discounts on cash purchases. All these plus exciting bundles of freebies await you on your visit to the exhibit and also in all Anson branches. Bring the entire family and choose from a wide selection of digital appliances from the world's biggest plasma to the smallest CTV monitor; LCD TVs, projection TVs, digital cameras, video cameras, iPods, and more. Gizmo kids would love PS2s and computers. There are toys for the big boys, too. Kuya, Dad and Ate would get hooked with the Ultima series of mopeds, motorbikes and scooters. Of course, for Mom, there's state-of-the-art cooking ranges, digital supersized refrigerators, user friendly air conditioners, imported bed sheets and comforters. Anson branches are strategically located. The biggest of them are in Ayala Center, Pasay Road, Makati facing Park Square 2; third floor, The Landmark; Edsa Node Level 3 of Robinsons Galleria; Madrigal Avenue, Alabang Town Center; and 800 Salazar, Binondo, Manila.

COLLECTIVE ASSISTANCE FOR ORIENTAL NEGROS' SMES

The Provincial Government of Oriental Negros, together with government institutions and 9 NGOs, have agreed to cooperate and help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Oriental Negros by promoting competitiveness through quality and productivity, management and technical training as well as assistance in equipment acquisition, packaging, possible funding and job creation. The role of each party concerned were specifically defined in a memo agreement signed during a meet held at the Bethel Hotel in Dumaguete City. Shown (seated from left), are: Mariant Escaño Villegas, Oriental Negros Provincial Board Member; Rep. Herminio Teves, of the 3rd District, Oriental Negros; Gov. George Arnaiz; Manuel Lim, trustee, Meralco Foundation Inc (MFI); and Julio Sy, Buglas Foundation chair. Standing, from left, are: Bonifacio Comandante, president, Buhl Worldwide Supply Inc; a DTI representative; Dr. Rene Gayo, MFI trustee; Raul Hernandez, PCCI VP for SMEs; Alex Escaño, MFI and PQPM president; Rodolfo Sabulao, DOLE director for Region VII; Buan Mondejar, Tesda director for Region 6; and Luis Lina, representative of the Lina Group of Companies and Fedex.

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02 Civic VTI 585T a/t 4267915

02CivicVTI 575T m/t 9254566

MITSUBISHI

GLXI 95" WEEL MAINTAINED NOTHING TO FIX 2727813

TOYOTA

1998 GLI Bnew Cond P350T(neg) 09198457226

RUSHI '98 RAV4 5dr MT Blk. P465T 935-9875 • 277-8230

VOLVO

98 VOLVO S70 AT P475T 0917-5383184

VAN/PICK-UP

2001 Strada, fully loaded, TV, 12cd changer, camper shell w /AC and Japanese Seat, bull bar, others. 780T Call 0920-8003033

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CARS/VANS/BRIDAL 8969956

Cheap Van Rental 9330311

P800/L3 9136710 / 4333682

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REVO w/driver 9272821

LAKBAY 951-9481

ABC RENT A CAR HI-ACE • STAREX L300 • CRV • REVO HONDA • VIOS • ALTIS • LYNX • CRLA MLA : 536-8822 • 303-9789 Q.C.: 426-2278 • 426-4084

CAR LOAN

1.5% Car Loan 5344441

1.5% Car Loan 5344441

1.5% CARLOAN 373-6519

1.5% CARLOAN 788-0361

1.5% Easy Car Loan 3748765

1.5% Easy Car Loan 4112547/48

1.5% Easy Carloan 7815352/55

1.5% Fast Car Loan 6560140

1.5% w/oTaking Car 7228942-43

1.5% w/oTaking Car 7228942-43

•1HR Fast Car Loan 7125202•

2% w/o Taking Car 7262780

2% w/o taking car 7880183-84

2% w/oTaking Car 8959454

2% w/oTaking Car 8966630/33

2% w/oTaking Car 7221021

2% w/oTaking Car 3732081/82

2% w/out taking car 6567685

2% w/out taking car 5315577

2% w/out taking car 5315577

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

BUY/SELL

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PETS

DOG TRAINER 0919-2050952

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Professional Urban Design Draftsman / CAD Designer

The Urban Planning and Development Authority of the State of Qatar is recruiting a team of professional draftsmen to prepare presentation exhibits for the Master Plan of Qatar.

Job Description: Prepare presentation exhibits and maps that support urban design solutions, urban planning proposals, and general presentations to upper management. Assesses current land database of the Planning Authority to capture required planning data and reorganize data in such a fashion to be used for analysis;

Required Skills: The candidate should have 5 years experience in drafting architectural and planning presentations, graphic design, mapping, and/or geography;

Education: BS/BA in planning, architectural design, graphic design, or a related field.

Email resumés to **HADLE62@yahoo.com** with "Draftsman Resumé" in the subject line. Salary is commensurate upon experience.

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- Not more than 50 years old
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- Have valid QDC / COC License

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No. 88 DESIGN PRO CENTER, Capitol Hills Drive, Diliman, Quezon City
(beside Celebrity Plaza)

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www.giathailand.com

PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

NOTICE is hereby given of the loss of PLATE # PVY-262 owned by EVELYN SENORAN.
(PDI-Jan. 28, Feb 4 & 11, 2005)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given that Stock Certificate No. M197B representing one (1) proprietary share in Sta. Elena Golf Club, Inc. owned by Philips Semiconductors Philippines, Inc. has been lost.

(PDI--Jan. 28, Feb. 4 & 7, 2005)

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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RTW Consign 09167940002

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MED REP 995-7539

Receptionist @ SM Megamall 17-28 Yrs Old 0917-8398638

SECRETARY 721-5055 721-2797 / 843-3548

MALE/FEMALE

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CAREGIVER T4043528

FOR IMMEDIATE HIRING REGISTERED NURSES CALL FOR INTERVIEW 09209245279

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MALE/FEMALE

Urgent Outbound EDUCATOR 18-35 yrs old Orientation on Feb 5,2005 2pm 9519936Alex

WANTED AUDITOR / BOOKKEEPER, MARKETING / ROVING SUPERVISOR w/Retail Exp. Promos w /Dept. Str. Exp. w/3-5yrs. Exp. Send Resume Shirley Dacles 4th Flr. Dolmar Bldg., Edsa, Mandaluyong City 726-6332

POEA 24-HR HOTLINES 722-1144 722-1155

Republic of the Philippines
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL PROSECUTOR
5th Floor Sandiganbayan Centennial Building
Commonwealth Avenue corner Balasan Road, Quezon City

BULLETIN OF VACANT POSITIONS

In Compliance with RA 7041

PROSECUTION BUREAU I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, CARIB and ASAB

Special Prosecution Officer I (16) positions, SG-26

**Item Nos. : OMBA-SPPOI-32-1998; OMBA-SPP01-9-1998;
OMBA-SPPOI-31-1998; OMBA-SPP01-33-1998;
OMBA-SPPOI-11-2003;OMBA-SPP01-18-1998;
OMBA-SPPOI-29-1998;OMBA-SPP01-34-1998;
OMBA-SPPOI-35-1998; OMBA-SPP01-1-2003;
OMBA-SPPOI-2-2003; OMBA-SPP01-14-2003;
OMBA-SPPOI-6-2003; OMBA-SPP01-7-2003;
OMBA-SPPOI-9-2003 and OMBA-SPP01-10-2003**

Qualification Standards

Education : Bachelor of Laws
Experience : 3 years of experience in the practice of law, counseling, investigation/prosecution of cases, hearings of administrative/criminal cases, legal research or other related work
Training : 24 hours of relevant training
Eligibility : RA 1080

Interested applicants should submit their applications to the Administrative Division, Office of the Special Prosecutor, 5th Flr. Sandiganbayan Centennial Building, Commonwealth Ave., Quezon City **within 20 working days from the date of this publication**, the following requirements: (1) A letter stating the position applied for; (2) duly accomplished Personal Data Sheet (Revised CSC Form 212); (3) 1" x 1" picture (colored); (4) Birth Certificate; (5) Bar Rating/CSC Certificate of Eligibility; (6) Transcript of Records (7) Certificate/s of Seminars/Training attended; (8) Service Records or Certificates from previous/present employers stating the positions assumed and corresponding actual duties and responsibilities (if applicable); (9) Police Clearance; (10) National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Clearance; (11) Civil Service Commission (CSC) Clearance (only for applicants who are or have been government employees); (12) Results of neuro-psychiatric test administered not earlier than six (6) months from the publication of the positions; and (13) Certification under oath of the applicant as to any relative(s) of the applicant within the fourth degree of consaguinity and affinity, currently employed with the Office of the Ombudsman.

TransCo

National Transmission Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Date: February 2, 2005
Contract No. BCMD.2005-005

1. Contract No.: BCMD.2005-005 Supply and Delivery of One (1) Unit of Brand New, Multi-Role, Twin-Engine Helicopter for TransCo Maintenance of Power Transmission Lines.
2. The contract to be performed by the successful bidder shall consist of supplying and delivering a Helicopter to TransCo Hangar, General Aviation Area, Domestic Airport, Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines.
3. The Approved Budget for the Contract to be bid from the Internal Cash Generation is P336,000,000.00.
4. Application for Eligibility is open to Filipino and Foreign manufacturers, suppliers/dealers, distributors who have the legal, technical and financial requisites of the contract to be bid.
5. Foreign bidders who wish to participate in the procurement of goods must prove that their respective countries of origin grant reciprocal rights to Filipino citizens with respect to procurement of goods by its government, in compliance with R.A. No. 5183.
6. Application for Eligibility shall be evaluated using "PASS/FAIL" criteria and only Eligible Bidders shall be included by TransCo in the bidding. All bids equal to or lower than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be evaluated based on the responsiveness of the supplier's offer to the contract under bidding subject to Post qualification before an award is made. Bid Prices submitted higher than the Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid shall be rejected and returned outright.
7. Eligibility and Bid Documents will be available for issuance on February 4, 2005 at the Bids and Contract Management Department, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Building, Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City 1104, Telefax No : 921-23-08 upon presentation of letter of intent and a payment of non-refundable fee of P20,000.00.
8. Deadline for submission of duly accomplished Application for Eligibility Forms, statements and Bid Proposals (Technical and Price) shall be on or before March 7, 2005, 1:30 P.M. and shall be submitted at the H.C. Gaerlan Function Room, Power Training Center Building, TransCo, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road TransCo, Diliman, Quezon City, Metro Manila.

   If the date is a non-working day or declared non-working holiday, the deadline for submission shall be moved to the next working day immediately following said date. Late submission shall not be accepted.
9. Pre-Bid Conference shall be held on February 17, 2005 at H.C. Gaerlan Function Room Power Training Center Building, TransCo, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman Quezon City, Metro Manila.
10. Manufacturers, suppliers/dealers, distributors not yet included in the TransCo List of registered Suppliers/Contractors, who wish to participate in the public bidding, in order to facilitate eligibility check/screening, are requested to register with the registration office mentioned above by submitting the following basic requirements, duly notarized, which should be maintained current and updated at least once a year. A certificate of Registration will be issued to suppliers/contractors upon approval.
    - Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) business name registration or Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) registration certificate, as appropriate;
    - Mayor's permit and/or municipal license for the current year;
    - Copy of Taxpayer's Identification Number (TIN) issued by BIR or Copy of BIR registration showing TIN;
    - Notarized statement of the prospective bidder that it is not "blacklisted" or barred from bidding by any government agency, office or corporation;
    - Audited financial statements, stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized institutions, for the immediately preceding calendar year, showing, among others, the prospective bidder's total and current assets and liabilities inclusive of Income Tax Return and Receipt.

    For foreign bidders, the required documents applicable to entities doing business in the Philippines shall be substituted by the appropriate equivalent documents issued by foreign bidder's country, which documents shall be duly acknowledged and/or authenticated by the Philippine Consulate thereat.

    Note: Prospective bidders may submit the above requirements together with their Eligibility Forms and Documents during the deadline for the submission of Eligibility requirements and Bid proposals (Technical and Price).
11. Transco reserves the right to reject any application for Eligibility or all bids without offering any reason, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government.
12. The Contract to be bid shall be governed by the Provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.
13. Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address

(Sgd.) GUILLERMO R. REDOBLADO
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – February 4, 2005)

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Regional Office I, San Juan, La Union
Tel. # : (072) 242-59-09 & (072) 700-25-79
Fax # : (072) 242-59-07 & (072) 252-59-08
E-mail Address: nfa-region1@sflu.com / Website: www.nfa.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID FOR TRUCKING/HAULING SERVICES

THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA) invites all interested Trucking/Hauling Operators to apply for eligibility and to bid for the supply of Trucking/Hauling Services for 2005 NFA imported and local rice covering the following specific routes:

	SOURCES/DESTINATION	Estimated Volume (In 50-kg Bag) for Transfer	Estimated Budget for the Contract(Rate in PhP/Bag xTotal Volume)
	LA UNION STAGING WHSES TO:		
1.	NFA Warehouses in ABRA	22,000	P 329,940.00
2.	NFA Warehouses in BENGUET	280,000	P 4,620,000.00
3.	NFA Warehouses in ILOCOS NORTE	80,000	P 1,296,600.00
4.	NFA Warehouses in ILOCOS SUR	105,000	P 1,160,600.00
5.	NFA Warehouses in EAST PANGASINAN	165,000	P 1,863,950.00
6.	NFA Warehouses in WEST PANGASINAN	228,000	P 2,664,300.00
	TOTAL	880,000	P11,935,390.00

Interested Trucking/Hauling Operators may bid in any or all specified/preferred destinations.
The Sschedule of Bidding activities is as follows:

ACTIVITIES	DATE	TIME
1. Issuance of Application and List of Eligibility Requirements, Bidding Documents	January 31-February 9, 2005	8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
2. Pre-bidding Conference	February 10, 2005	10:00 AM
3. Deadline for the Submission of Eligibility Requirements and Bid Proposals (Opening of bids will follow immediately)	February 23, 2005	10:00 AM

The application forms, eligibility requirements and other bid documents shall be obtained from the RBAC Secretariat after payment of a non-refundable bidding fee in the amount of P5,000.00.

The pre-bid conference and bidding proper shall be conducted at the NFA Conference Room, 2nd Floor, NFA Office Building, San Juan, La Union. All Trucking/Hauling Operators interested to participate in the bidding must be registered/accredited with NFA. Interested bidders who are not NFA-Accredited Trucking/Hauling Operators and/or whose Registration had already expired may still participate provided they shall apply for accreditation/renewal at NFA Region I not later than February 9, 2005.

The eligibility of prospective bidders shall be determined using simple "Pass/Fail" criteria and shall be considered as either "Eligible" or "Ineligible." If the prospective bidder is rated "Passed" for all the requirements, he shall be considered "Eligible." If the prospective bidder is rated "Failed" in any one of the requirements, he shall be considered "Ineligible."

Eligibility criteria includes among others that the value of the prospective bidder's largest single contract within the last three (3) years, adjusted to current prices, completed within the period and similar to the contract be bid must at least 50% of the approved budget for the contract to be bid.

A single stage bidding will be adopted using a simple pass/fail criteria for the evaluation. The prospective bidders shall submit simultaneously three (3) envelopes, one containing the eligibility requirements and two (2) envelopes containing bidding documents. Contents of each of the bid envelopes are specified in the Instruction to Bidders.

For further inquiries, please contact the RBAC Chairman Ruben S. Rimando at the Regional Office 01, San Juan La Union or at Tel. Nos. (072) 242-59-09 and (072) 700-25-79.

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGH T TO ACCEPT OR REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS OR TO AWARD TO ANY CONTRACTOR WHOSE BID IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA AND/OR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

(Sgd.) RUBEN S. RIMANDO, CESO VI
Assistant Regional Manager
& Chairman, RBAC

(PDI - January 29 & February 4, 2005)

National Power Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

NPC-PSD-2005-03

The Bids and Awards Committee (BAC)-PSD of NPC invites interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following requirements:

SCHEDULE	ITEM/DESCRIPTION	PR NUMBER	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT
DATE OF BIDDING: MARCH 1, 2005; 2:00 PM			
3A1	BATTERY, SECONDARY, GEL TYPE	5PGP2-05-001 (JP)	P 3,300,000.00
3A2	PARTS FOR SF6 CIRCUIT BREAKERS, 138 KV	5LGP-04-443 (JP)	P 6,129,200.00
3A3	TURBINE BLADES, 3RD STAGE	5LGP-05-010 (JP)	P 16,200,000.00
DATE OF BIDDING: MARCH 2, 2005; 2:00 PM			
3B1	J.O.-SUPPLY OF LABOR, MATLS. TOOLS & EQUIPT IN THE SUPPLY, DELIVERY, INSTALLATION & COMMISSIONING OF ONE (1) UNIT 15 KV VACUUM SWITCHGEAR	3TIW-04-040 (RP)	P 4,900,000.00
NOTE: A Pre-Bidding Conference will be held at the Bidding Room for the following bidding schedules on:			
3A1-3A3	February 15, 2005; 2:00 PM	3 B1	February 16, 2005; 2:00 pm

Complete sets of Application form for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be obtained from the Procurement Services Division, Materials Management Dept. of NPC, Diliman, Quezon City upon payment of non-refundable fee of PHP 500.00 per schedule starting on February 9, 2005 Issuance of eligibility and bid documents mornings only, 8:30 to 11:30 AM up to the specified time as stated in the bid schedules above. No bid documents will be issued three (3) calendar days before the date of bidding.

Bids will received at the assigned Bidding Room, PSD, MMD, NPC, Diliman, Quezon City on the date and time specified above after which Eligibility Requirements and Bid Proposals will be opened in the presence of attending bidders. Certificate of Registrations issued by other NPC Offices will be honored provided that the Certification is still valid. Prospective Bidders shall signify conformance to bidding terms and conditions as required and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution in accordance with the IRR of "Republic Act 9184."

The Bidders shall furnish as part of his/her bid, a bid security in the amount equivalent to a percentage of the approved budget for the contract to be bid in the form of Cash, Manager's/Cashier's Check, Irrevocable Letter of Credit-One Percent (1%), Surety Bond – Two and a half percent (2.5%), penal and callable on demand with 120 days validity period from the date of opening of bids issued by a Surety or Insurance Company accredited by the Office of the Insurance Commission.

NPC reserves the right to reject any or all bids at any time prior to award of contract, waive any defects therein, and accept the offer most advantageous to the Corporation, without thereby incurring any of the following: a) liability whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of the bids and b) obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the grounds for the basis of the BAC's action.

Cor. Quezon Avenue & Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines 1100
Telephone: (632) 921-3541 to 921-3580 Facsimile: (632) 921-2468
P.O. Box 1335 E-mail: diliman@napocor.gov.ph Internet: hpp://www.napocor.gov.ph

CHAIRMAN
Bids and Awards Committee
PSD-NPC

(PDI – February 4, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE RE- SUBMISSION
OF THE UNIFORM FILING REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE UNBUNDLING OF RATES

ERC CASE NO. 2004-456

PUBLIC UTILITY DEPARTMENT –
CITY OF OLONGAPO (PUD-OLONGAPO)
Applicant.
x- -x

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

Notice is hereby given of the re-submission by applicant Public Utility Department, City of Olongapo (PUD-OLONGAPO) on December 9, 2004 of its Uniform Filing Requirements (UFR) for the unbundling of rates, docketed as ERC Case No. 2004-456. PUD-OLONGAPO proposed an Over-all Average Tariff Adjustment (OATA) of P0.9882/kWh

The Commission has set the application for hearing on February 22, 2005 at two o'clock (2:00 PM) in the afternoon at the ERC Hearing Room, 15th Floor, Pacific Center Building, San Miguel Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

All interested parties who may wish to comment on or oppose the said application should file their comments and/or oppositions on or before the date of hearing. Such parties who may wish to have details of the application and who shall have manifested to the Commission their desire and intention to participate actively in the proceedings, may request that before the date of hearing, they be furnished with copies of the application by the applicant, which is hereby directed to furnish the parties making such request with copies of the application and its attachments. Likewise, any such interested party may examine the application and other pertinent records filed with the Commission during the usial office hours.

WITNESS, the Honorable RODOLFO B. ALBANO, JR., Chairman, and the Honorables OLIVER B. BUTALID, JESUS N. ALCORDO, and ALEJANDRO Z. BARIN, Commissioners Energy Regulatory Commission, this 10th day of January, 2005 at Pasig City.

(Sgd.) ATTY. FRUCTUOSO C. LAGUNZAD, JR.
Executive Director III

(PDI–Feb 4 & 11, 2005)

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Quezon City

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

The National Food Authority (NFA) is inviting all eligible palay Farmers Organizations (FOs) to participate in the distribution of rice under the "INSTITUTIONALIZED FARMERS AS DISTRIBUTORS" (IFAD) Program of the National Food Authority.

All interested parties are advised to accomplish a Letter of Intent (LOI), copies of which are available at the NFA Provincial Offices in their respective areas, to be submitted within ten (10) working days after the last day of publication. They should likewise meet the following qualifications:

- Must be operational and registered with any of the appropriate registering agencies as listed below.
  Cooperative Development Authority (CDA)
  Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)
  Bureau of Labor Relations (BLR)
  Bureau of Rural Workers (BRW)
  National Irrigation Administration (NIA)
- Must be member of a local farmers' action council or the Philippine Farmers' Advisory Board (PFAB).
- Must be a holder of NFA license as retailer/wholesaler and other incidental lines of activities, i.e., warehousing and transporting, if any.
- Must be a holder of Certificate of Operations and Good Standing issued by the appropriate registering agency, to be submitted to the concerned NFA Provincial Office.

Specifically, the NFA has allocated a total volume of some 1,000,000 bags of rice, 25% BKN for this Program distributed among regions as follows:

Region	Allocation
NCR	10,000
Ilocos Region	90,000
Cagayan Valley	130,000
Central Luzon	140,000
Southern Tagalog	90,000
Bicol	70,000
Western Visayas	150,000
Central Visayas	20,000
Eastern Visayas	60,000
Western Mindanao	40,000
Northern Mindanao	30,000
Southern Mindanao	30,000
Central Mindanao	70,000
ARMM	40,000
CARAGA	30,000

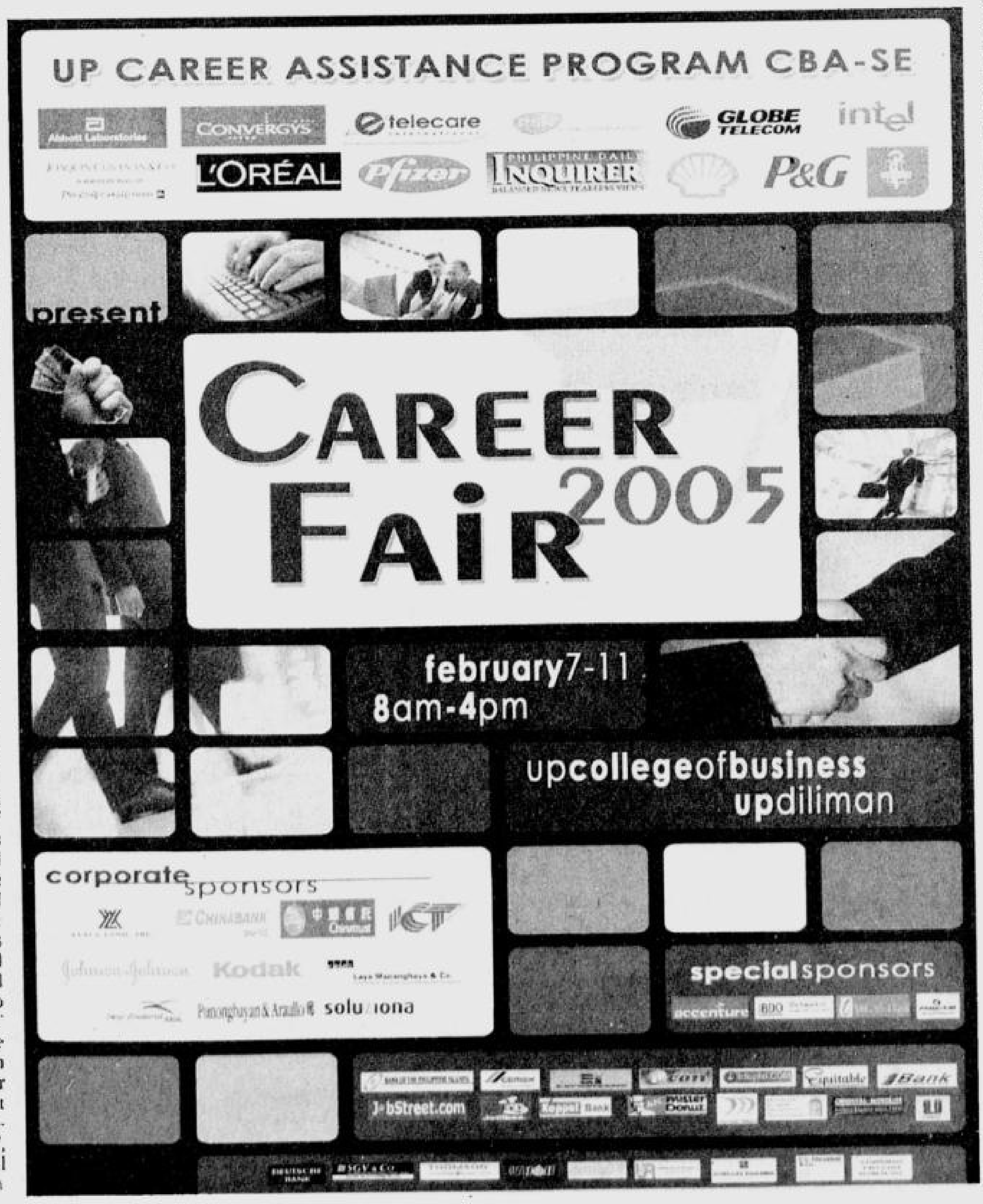
For details, they may coordinate with the nearest NFA Office in their respective areas. For further inquiries, they may visit or contact NFA-DMO located at the 5th Flr., Matimyas Bldg., 101 E. Rodriguez Sr., Avenue, Quezon City with telephone nos. 712-1572, 712-1708 or 712-1564.

(Sgd.) GREGORIO Y. TAN, JR.
Administrator

(PDI - February 3, 4 & 5, 2005)

John Maxwell's 'Developing The Leader Within You' workshop

NETWORK TwentyOne Inc Philippines held its first interactive workshop developed by renowned author, John Maxwell, Developing The Leader Within You last Jan. 25 to 26. These 12 powerful sessions in 2 remarkable days were attended by professionals and business owners from leading industries. 'We are proud to offer Developing The Leader Within You to all leaders and would-be leaders in the Philippines, whether in the workplace or in the home,' says Benji Albea, country manager of Network TwentyOne Inc Philippines. "This program addresses the important issues of leadership behaviors based on values. It will help leaders integrate Maxwell's Laws of Leadership into their day-to-day activities as well as understand and develop the critical behaviors required to effectively lead others." To register, or for more information on Developing The Leader Within You, contact Baby at 433-0021/434-3678 ext. 104 and 107, or email [illegible]



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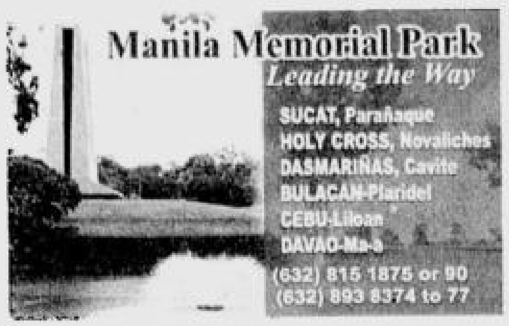
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OBITUARIES

Message of Thanks

We, the family and loved ones of the late

CARLOS MIGUEL ABLAZA BALUYUT,

wish to thank you for all your prayers
since Miggy was diagnosed with stomach cancer last March 2004
and up to the time of his demise last 10 January 2005,
the time you spent with him and with us at home,
at the hospital, and at his wake, your thoughtful acts of kindness
and warm words of comfort, and your oneness with us during
the most difficult time of our lives.

May we request you to continue to pray for the eternal repose
of Miggy's soul and may the good Lord reward you a hundredfold
for your goodness of heart.

Charlie Baluyut, Vi Ablaza and Jerry Sison, Grace Fulgencio,
Luigi Baluyut, Ana and John Janecek, Leah and Mike Galisim,
Babs and Kevin Yaptenco, Jules and Maia Lazo,
Cely Cinco and Sariel Ablaza

COL. WILLIAM "WILLIE" N. CHAVEZ (Ret.)

Joined his Creator
on February 03, 2005 at the age of 88.

He leaves behind his beloved wife **ESTER**; children **MANDY & BOOTS, BEBET & CHIPPY, JI & CECILE**; grandchildren **SUNSHINE & KEN, BUNGGOY** (†), **BEAM & BEN, DATO; MIA, CHUCK; MIGGY, ANJO, MELISSA, ANDREA**; sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, nephews & nieces.

His body lies in state at Funeraria Nacional, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Funeral Mass will be on Tuesday, February 08, 2005 at 8:00 a.m. after which his remains will be cremated.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

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OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:

❶ Copy of Death Certificate ❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT
MESSAGE OF THANKS • DEATH ANNIVERSARY
REQUIEMS • FREE OBIT DESIGN

We remember with love and affection

JUSTICE CECILIO L. PE

On his 15th Death Anniversary (Feb. 4, 1990)

Masses will be offered in Damar Villages Immaculate Concepcion Parish on February 4, 5, 6, 7 at 6:15 a.m.

His loved ones: **Josefina, Joseph, Raymond Thomas** and **Mary Rose** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

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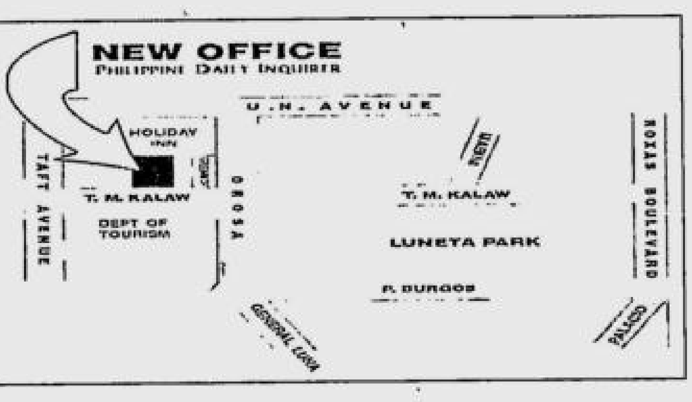

"We know that God raised the Lord Jesus from death. He will raise us to life with Jesus. He will present us, along with you, to God."
2 Corinthians 4:14

"For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

The Board of Directors and Members of
PHILIPPINE COMPUTER SOCIETY
deeply condole with the family of

Connie Lopez-Manuel

Former PCS Vice President

who passed away February 2, 2005.

She will be missed by her husband, Titus,
sister, Mimi, and niece, Trisha.
Relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray
for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Chapel O, Loyola Memorial Chapels,
Guadalupe, Makati City.

Mass and cremation will be at 8:00 p.m. on
Saturday, February 5, 2005 at the Crematorium
Family Room, Loyola Memorial Chapels,
Guadalupe, Makati City

CLASSIFIEDS

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Region 01, San Juan, La Union
Tel. # : (072) 242-59-09 & (072) 700-25-79
Fax # : (072) 242-59-07 & (072) 252-59-08
E-mail Address: nfa-region1@sflu.com / Website: www.nfa.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID FOR INTEGRATED CARGO HANDLING SERVICES FOR NFA REGION 01

The National Food Authority, NFA Regional Office 01, San Juan, La Union invites qualified Integrated Cargo Handling Services Contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the provision of Integrated Cargo Handling Services in the discharging of more or less 50,000 MT or 1,000,000 bags rice imports for the year 2005, at Poro Port, San Fernando City and delivery to designated warehouses within La Union to include but not limited to arrastre, stevedoring, wharfage, maintenance and security fee, hauler's pass, truckscaling, and trucking with an Approved Budget for the Contract of P20,391,525.00.

The Schedule of Bidding activities are as follows:

1. Issuance of Application and List of Eligibility Requirements, Bidding Documents
   – January 31-February 09, 2005 (8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.)
2. Pre-Bidding Conference – February 10, 2005 (10:00 a.m.)
3. Deadline for the Submission of Eligibility Requirements and Bid Proposals (Opening of Bids will follow immediately)
   – February 23, 2005 (10:00 a.m.)

The application forms, eligibility requirements and other bid documents shall be obtained from the RBAC Secretariat after payment of a non-refundable bidding fee in the amount of P5,000.00.

The deadline for submission of application for eligibility and to bid, eligibility requirements, bid proposals and other required documents shall be on February 23, 2005 not later than 10:00 o'clock A.M. at NFA Conference Room, 2nd Floor, NFA Office Building, San Juan, La Union.

The eligibility of prospective bidders shall be determined using simple "Pass/Fail criteria and shall be considered as either "eligible" or "ineligible." If the prospective bidder is rated "Passed" for all the requirements, he shall be considered "eligible." If the prospective bidder is rated "Failed" in any one of the requirements, he shall be considered ineligible.

A single stage bidding will be adopted using a simple pass/fail criteria for the evaluation. The prospective bidders shall submit simultaneously three (3) envelopes one containing the eligibility requirements and two (2) envelopes containing bidding documents. Contents of each of the bid envelopes are specified in the Instructions to Bidders.

Eligibility criteria includes among others that the value of the prospective bidders largest single contract within the last three (3) years, adjusted to current prices, completed within the period and similar to the contract be bid must be at least fifty percent (50%) of the approved budget for the contract to be bid.

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGH T TO ACCEPT OR REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA AND/OR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

For further inquiries, please contact the RBAC Chairman Ruben S. Rimando or RBAC Secretariat Ms. Noemi Susan T. Buncab at the Regional Office 01, San Juan La Union or at Tel. Nos. (072) 242-59-09 or (072) 700-25-79.

(Sgd.) RUBEN S. RIMANDO, CESO VI
Assistant Regional Manager
& RBAC Chairman

(PDI – January 29 & February 4, 2005)

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Region 01, San Juan, La Union
Tel. # : (072) 242-59-09 & (072) 700-25-79
Fax # : (072) 242-59-07 & (072) 252-59-08
E-mail Address: nfa-region1@sflu.com / Website: www.nfa.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID FOR HANDLING SERVICES

THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA) invites all interested Handling Contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the Unloading Services of 2005 NFA imported / local rice at the different NFA / Leased Warehouses in Region I, to wit:

	Province / Destination / Warehouses	Approved Volume (in bags of 50 kg) for Transfer Within the Region	Approved Budget for the Contract (Rate per bag of 50 kg (P) per trip x Total Volume
1.	NFA GID Warehouse, San Juan/ Staging Warehouse, La Union	1,860,000	5,580,000.00
2.	NFA Loakan/NFA Kadiwa Warehouse Baguio City	280,000	840,000.00
3.	NFA GID Warehouse, Abra	22,000	66,000.00
4.	NFA GID Warehouse, Laoag City, Ilocos Norte	60,000	180,000.00
5.	NFA GID Warehouse, Bantay, Ilocos Sur	105,000	315,000.00
6.	NFA GID Warehouse, Binalonan/ NFA Rosales Warehouse, Rosales, Pangasinan	165,000	495,000.00
7	NFA GID Alaminos/ NFA GID Warehouse, Mangatarem, Pangasinan	228,000	684,000.00

Interested Handling Contractors may bid on any or all warehouse-destinations.

The Schedule of Bidding activities are as follows:

1 Issuance of Application and List of Eligibility Requirements, Bidding Documents
  – January 31-February 09, 2005 (8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.)
2. Pre-Bidding Conference – February 10, 2005 (10:00 a.m.)
3. Deadline for the Submission of Eligibility Requirements and Bid Proposals (Opening of Bids will follow immediately)
  – February 23, 2005 (10.00 a.m.)

The application forms, eligibility requirements and other bid documents shall be obtained from the RBAC Secretariat after payment of a non-refundable bidding fee in the amount of P5,000.00.

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A single stage bidding will be adopted using a simple pass/fail criteria for the evaluation. The prospective bidders shall submit simultaneously three (3) envelopes, one containing the eligibility requirements and two (2) envelopes containing bidding documents. Contents of each of the bid envelopes are specified in the Instructions to Bidders.

Eligibility criteria includes among others that the value of the prospective bidders largest single contract within the last three (3) years, adjusted to current prices, completed within the period and similar to the contract be bid must be at least fifty percent (50%) of the approved budget for the contract to be bid.

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ACCEPT OR REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS OR TO AWARD TO ANY CONTRACTOR WHOSE BID IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA AND/OR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

For further inquiries, please contact the RBAC Chairman Ruben S. Rimando or RBAC Secretariat Ms. Noemi Susan T. Buncab at the Regional Office 01, San Juan, La Union or at Tel. Nos. (072) 242-59-09 or (072) 700-25-79.

(Sgd.) RUBEN S. RIMANDO, CESO VI
Assistant Regional Manager
& RBAC Chairman

(PDI – January 28 & February 4, 2005)

PAMBANSANG PANGASIWAAN SA PAGKAIN
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY

MATIMYAS BLDG., 101 E. RODRIGUEZ SR. AVE., QUEZON CITY
TEL. NO.: (632) 712-3341 TO 54 FAX NO.: (632) 712-1110 E-mail www.nfa.gov.ph

ANNOUNCEMENT OF BIDDING

In consonance with R.A. 8976 otherwise known as the Philippine Food Fortification Act of 2000, the National Food Authority (NFA) as the implementing agency on iron fortified rice, wishes to announce that it will be conducting a bidding on February 24, 2005 at 10:00 AM at the NFA Boardroom, 10th Floor, Matimyas Bldg., 101 E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue, Quezon city among all interested suppliers for the supply of THREE HUNDRED METRIC TONS (300 MT), MAXIMUM IRON COATED RICE GRAIN PREMIX (FORTIFICANT) with an approved budget of Php 52M, packed in twenty five (25) or fifty (50) kg capacity nitrogen or vacuum sealed laminated film bag as primary packaging and multi-walled paper as secondary packaging (strong enough to withstand handling). Detailed product specifications shall be included in the Terms of Reference (TOR). Delivery period at designated NFA Manila warehouse/s shall be not later than 31 May 2005 and with BUYER'S option for an early delivery.

All interested suppliers are required to submit price offers in Philippine Currency (inclusive of all taxes) as specified in the NFA Bid Form.

All bidders are required to post a bid bond equivalent to 5% of the approved budget of Php 52M in the form of Cash, Cashier's and/or Manager's Check or an irrevocable L/C issued by a reputable bank in Metro Manila.

List of Eligibility Requirements and Instruction to Bidders may be secured thru MR. TOMAS R. ESCAREZ, Assistant Department Manager and MR. NESTOR U. PUANGCO, Division Manager, Department for Marketing Operations, 5th Flr., NFA Matimyas Bldg., 101 E. Rodriguez Sr. Ave., Quezon City, Telephone Nos. 712-1564, 743-86-96 or 712-3341 Loc. 8513 Loc. 8513 starting January 26, 2005.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) and Bid Documents will likewise be available starting January 26, 2005 up to February 16, 2005 (8:00 AM - 5:00 PM) upon payment of a Php 15,000.00 non-refundable fee.

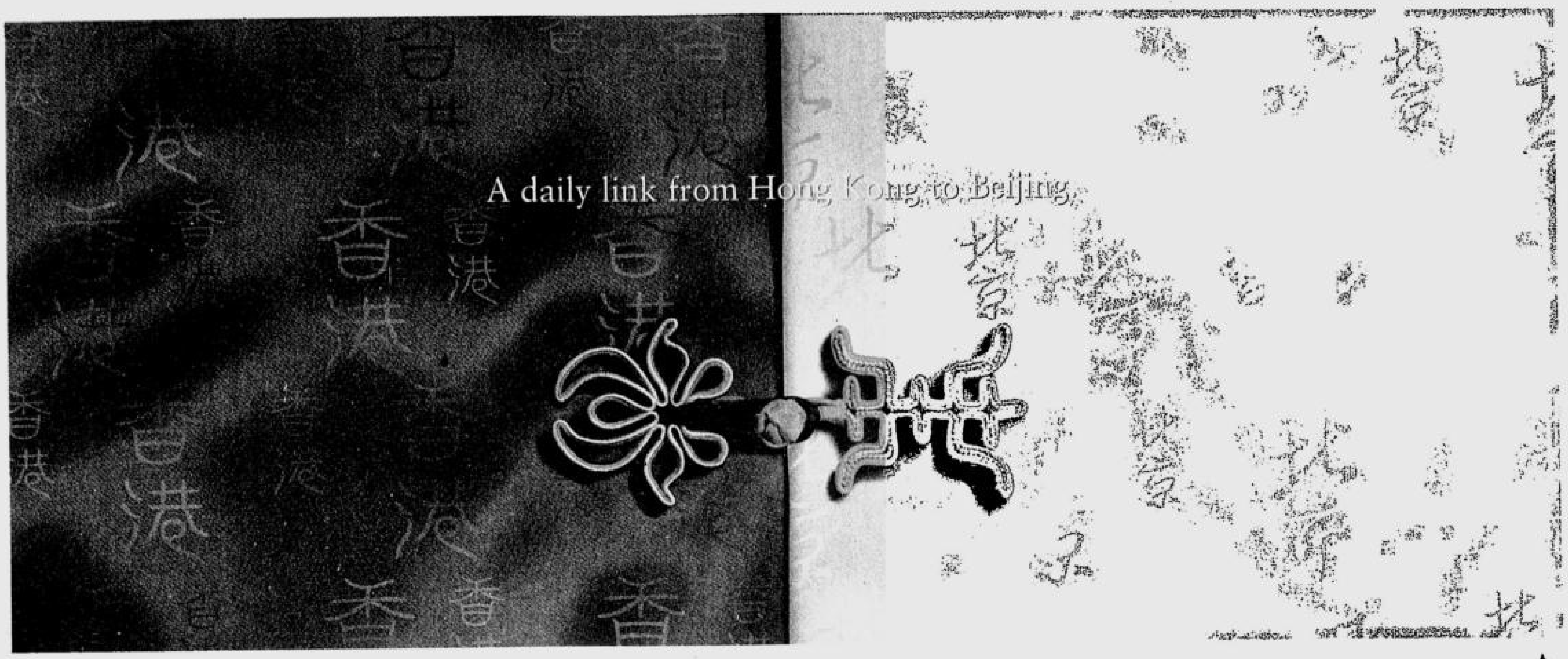
The **Pre-Bidding** conference will be held on **February 10, 2005 at 10:00 AM** at the NFA Boardroom, 10th Floor, Matimyas Bldg., 101 E. Rodriguez Sr., Avenue, Quezon City.

Submission of eligibility requirements, technical proposal and price offers will be between 8:00 AM to 9:55 AM at the NFA Boardroom, 10th Floor, Matimyas Bldg., 101 E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue, Quezon City on **February 24, 2005. Opening of bids** will start at exactly **10:00 A.M.**

The National Food Authority reserves the right to reject any or all bid proposals, to waive any required or defect therein and accept the bid/s which is deemed most advantageous to the Agency.

(Sgd.) JESSUP P. NAVARRO
Deputy Administrator and
Chairman, Bids and Awards
Committee

(PDI – January 26 & February 4, 2005)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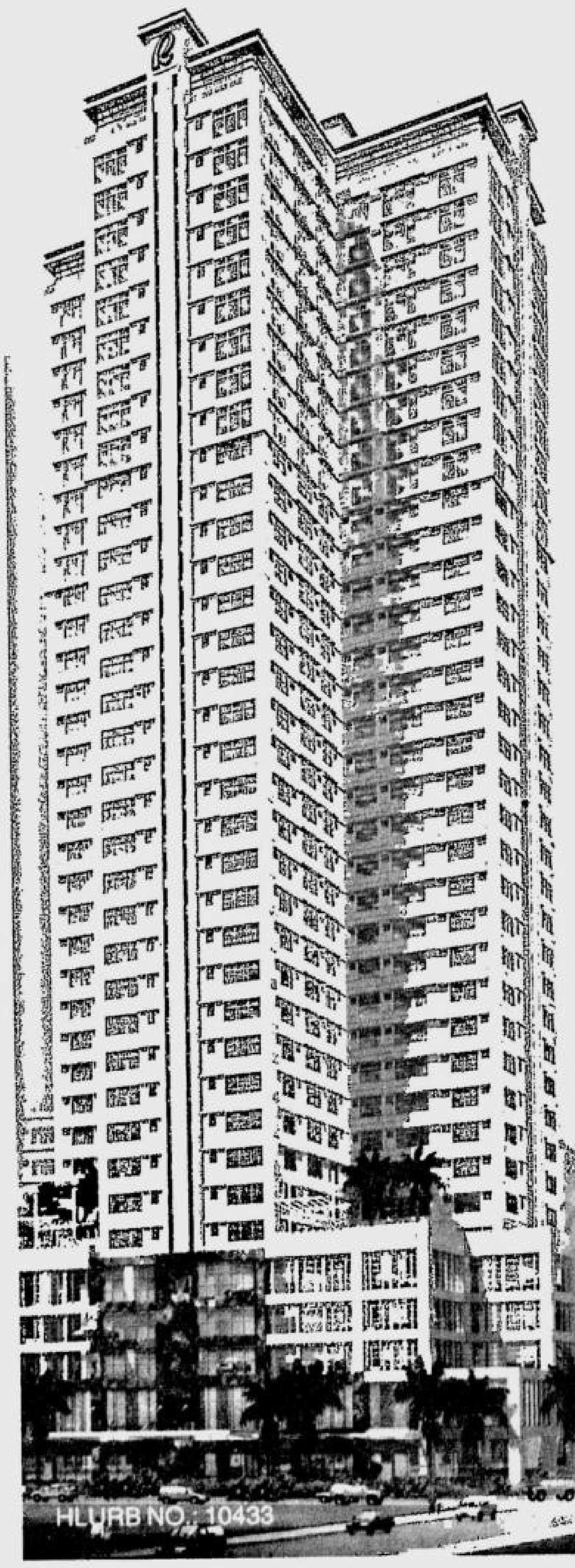

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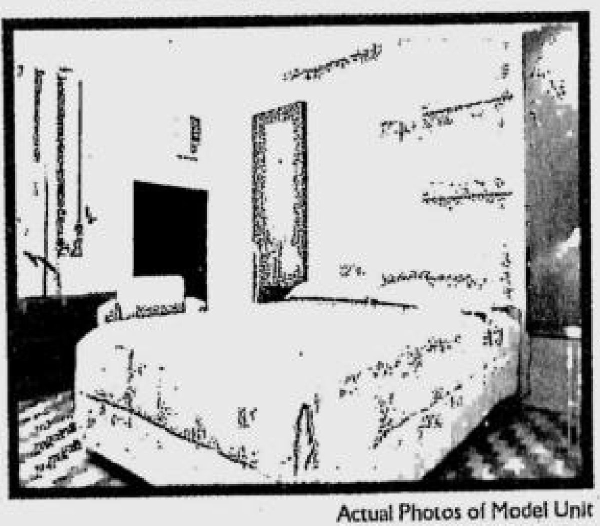

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ENTER NEW ARENAS

How 'boringly big' creates excitement

By Margie Quimpo-Espino

HOW can a boringly big company that has a virtual monopoly of the market it's in still create excitement?

Surprisingly, there are still a number of ways, especially if the giant is starting to spread its arms into new businesses.

"If you think of us as one large homogenous company, this is not true. We are in different stages of growth in different parts of the world," states Saw Ken Wye, president of the Southeast Asia region of Microsoft Operations Pte. Ltd. "We are a global company but we think local."

And Microsoft knows that while it may be big in the US and Europe there is still so much potential in the region Ken manages.

Microsoft Philippines Inc. managing director Antonio "TJ" Javier expounds on the diversification of Microsoft, a $36-billion company whose products are used by almost anyone who deals with a computer.

New ventures

Microsoft has been going into mobility, meaning cellular phones or personal digital assistants (PDAs) operating on Windows; Microsoft network (MSN); home entertainment which principally involves games; and the Microsoft Business Suite which aims to create business systems especially for small to medium scale businesses.

These new arenas make companies like SAP, Nokia and Sony as competitors for Microsoft.

Ken points out people usually only see Microsoft and its traditional bread and butter (Windows and Office) businesses. But over the past couple of years, the US firm has already evolved into a more diverse conglomerate.

He admits that although Microsoft is huge, it does not "dominate every single market we operate in."

In fact it continues to adjust to the different markets it sells its products in. In the Southeast Asia region alone, he enumerates the diverse strategies they have had to adopt. The countries include Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Country strategies

Asked how they sell in each country, Ken gives some interesting insights:

"Singapore is a very binary market—it's 1 or 0; benefits and costs. People make logical decisions.

"The Philippines is more emotional; you have to tag at the segment. Marketing here is about customer connection and it's not just above the line. In the Philippines, people are vocal which is why we created M-Pulse (a group of Microsoft clients).

"The Thais—you never see them angry. You cannot be too formal nor informal with them. If you know them superficially, they will never tell you their complains, they will just stop buying your product.

"Indonesia is a mix. It has very large corporations and multinationals. Many rely on trusted advisers so you have to get 'endorsers.'

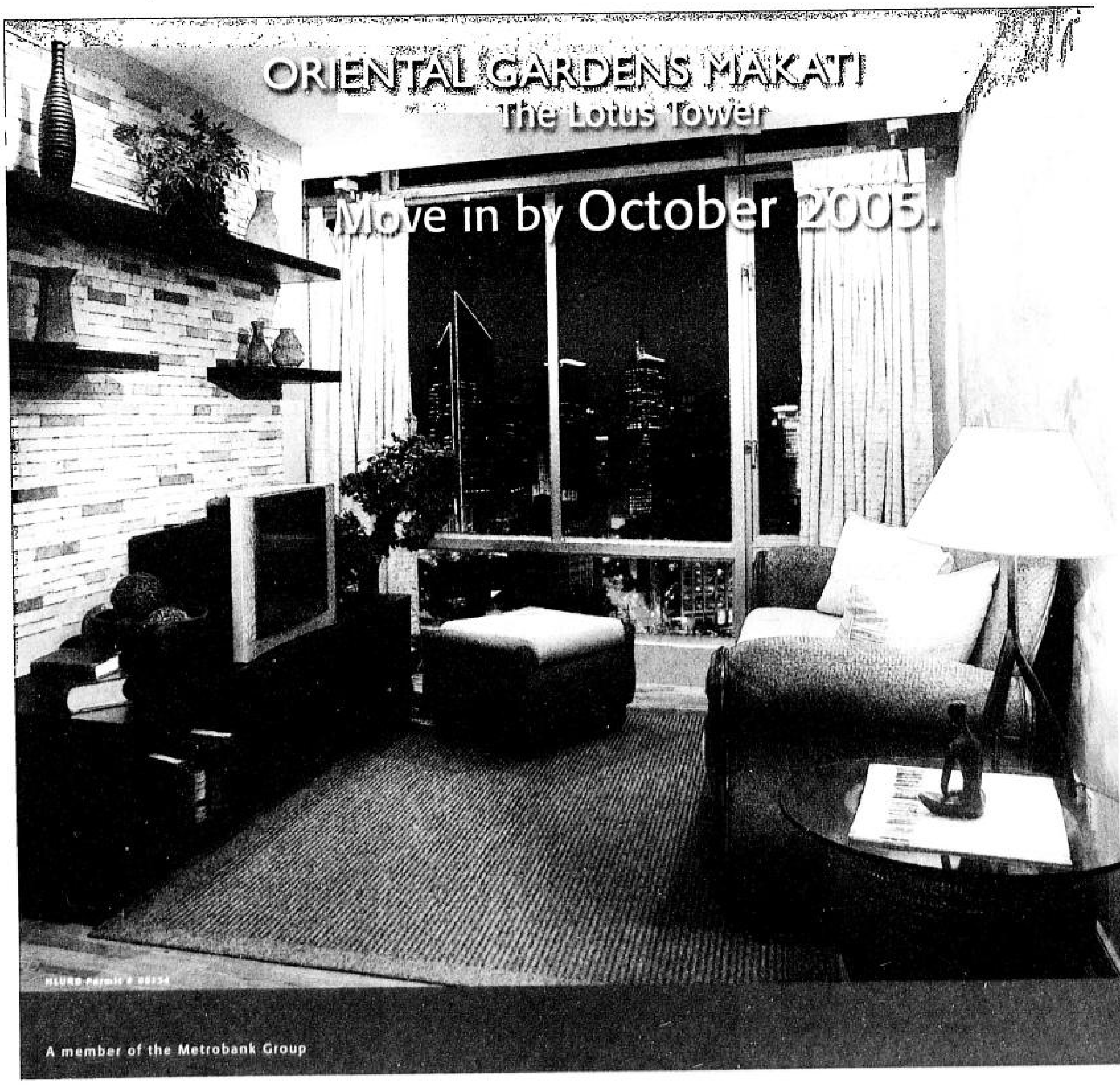
"Vietnam is like China five to eight years

HOW BORINGLY/ B2-2

KEN: We are a global company but we think local.

TJ JAVIER says Microsoft has allotted $12.5 million (some P680 million) in five years for citizenship programs in the Philippines

NIGHT & DAY



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How 'boringly big' creates excitement

From page B2-1

ago. Literacy is high and the people are smart. But it's tough because piracy is high. So we market the servers more than the desktops."

But as Microsoft continues to grow and diversify its businesses, its founder Bill Gates appears to be also doing a parallel pursuit with its corporate social responsibility. He recently had an interview on CNN where he talked about poverty, death—non-business topics.

In the Philippines, Microsoft commits $12.5 million for five years (starting 2004) for its community programs. One of these is the Connected Learning Community Program which aims to link the remotest areas of the Philippines into one global community via computer laboratories for underprivileged high schools.

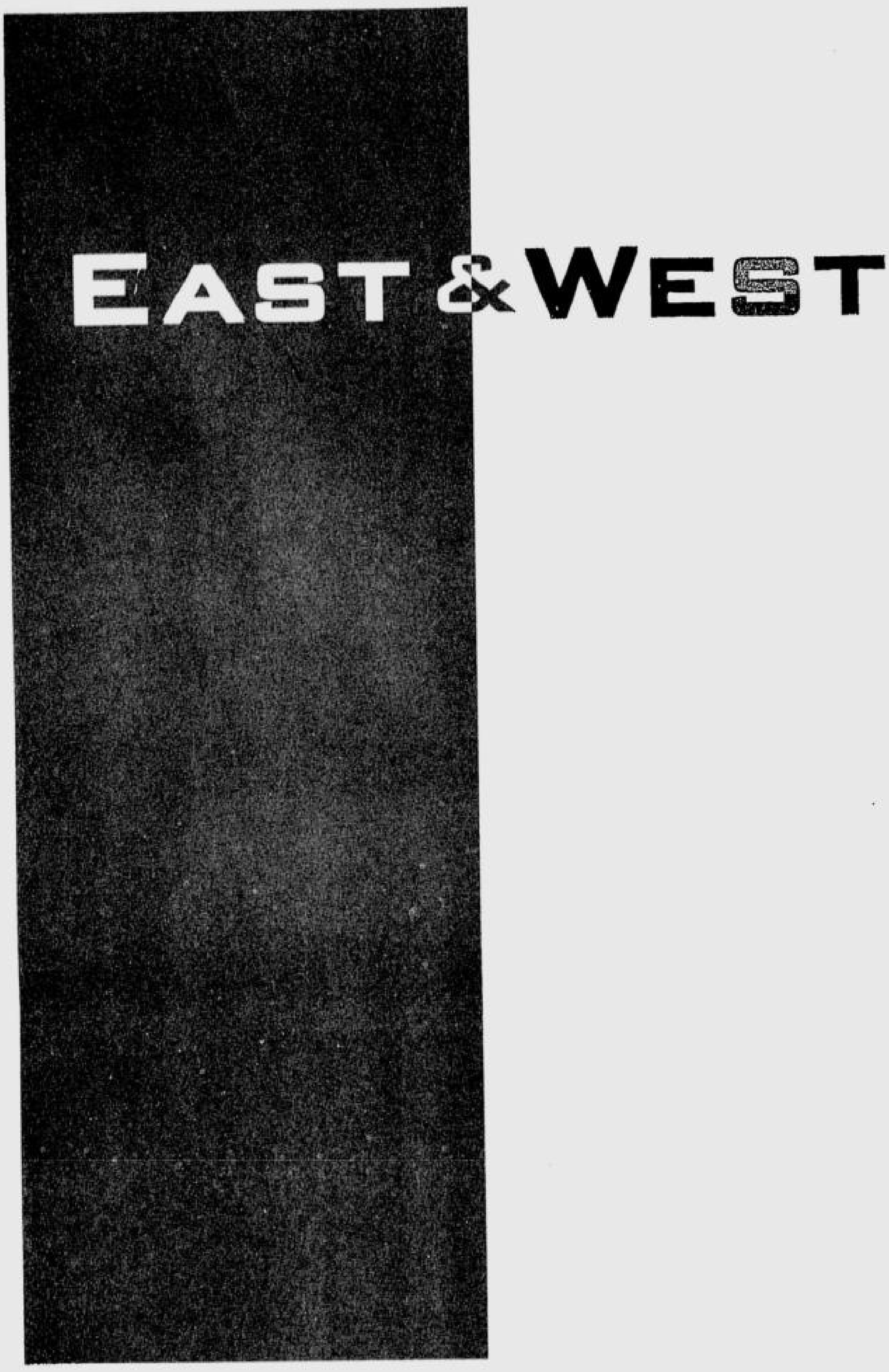
Partners in Learning aims to empower teachers and students to achieve their fullest potential by providing the latest computer technology and training on how to use them.

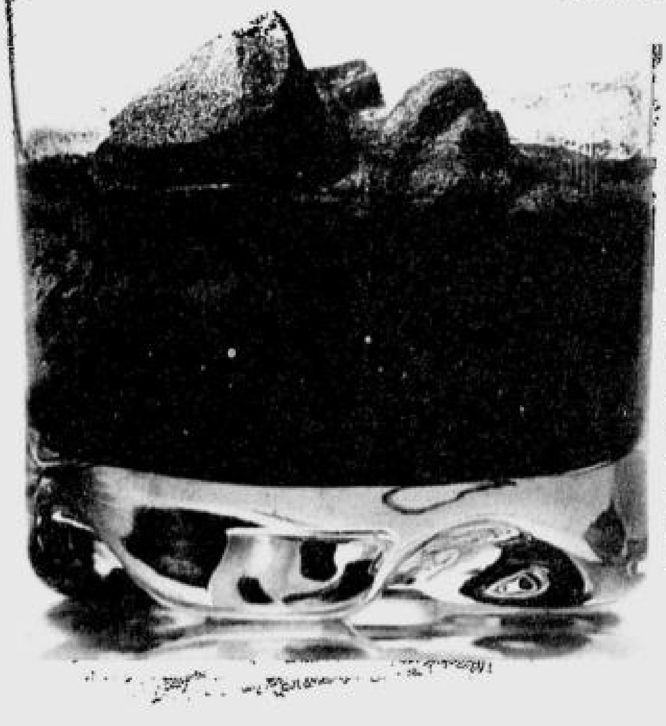
Microsoft's Unlimited Potential is focused on improving lifelong learning for deserving individuals by providing technology skills through community-based technology learning centers.

Security

On security, a concern of some businesses, Ken points out this is a continuous battle.

"It's an ongoing issue. You just have to stay ahead."





Drink up or speak up. Our continued reliance on imported fossil fuels like coal and oil for energy is one of the largest reasons behind problems like global warming, air pollution, the rise in respiratory ailments, and the worsening condition of our water supplies. This dependence also leaves us economically vulnerable to the spiralling cost of coal and oil in the world market. And things will only get murkier unless we reduce our use of coal and oil and push for the increased use of renewable energy sources like geothermal, wind, biomass, hydro, and solar. Speak up and let the government know you want clean energy. Text WWF YES <Your Name> to 2366 for Globe (P2.50/text) or log on to www.powerswitch.org.ph/vote. Act now and help get the Renewable Energy Bill passed into law. Maybe then, the future won't be such a hard thing to swallow.

INQUIRER WWF

To NAP or not to NAP?

By Joel L. Tan-Torres
SGV & Co.

TAX-FILES

A COMPANY'S management or its chief financial officer, aside from determining the amount of income tax to pay this coming tax deadline date of April 15, must also decide whether or not his company will pay an additional amount to avail of the no audit program (NAP) of the government.

On Jan. 13, 2005, the President issued Executive Order (EO) No. 399 instructing the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) to establish a program, to be known as "No Audit Program (NAP)," whereby qualified taxpayers may be exempted from BIR audit and/or investigation. The program will be effective for five years beginning taxable year 2004.

Per news accounts, it was Sen. Franklin Drilon who initiated this program when he endorsed a recommendation to the President for a "no BIR audit" incentive approach to assist in addressing the fiscal problems of the country.

Objectives of the NAP

The program is intended to promote optimum tax compliance by providing taxpayers with incentives to voluntarily declare and pay higher taxes. This incentive is in the form of reduced administrative costs entailed from an audit by the BIR. The cost, as well as the pressures and tension in dealing with a tax investigation can be avoided by a taxpayer availing of the NAP.

Anyone who has undergone a BIR tax audit is familiar with the rigors that one is exposed to during an examination. A taxpayer incurs considerable time and costs responding to the requirements of a BIR examiner conducting an investigation of the books and records of the company.

One has to retrieve records which have long been filed and stored, reproduce copies of documents that need to be attached to the BIR audit report, attend conferences with the BIR examiners, and deal with the BIR findings and threat of deficiency tax assessment, penalties and interest that sometimes can come up to an amount higher than the company's reported income or total asset holdings.

Therefore, it is not surprising that quite a number of taxpayers have availed of similar programs of the BIR in the past and now the NAP, which would give them comfort and peace of not being subjected to a BIR tax audit.

Qualifying conditions

Under the NAP, exemption from BIR audit can be granted if all of the following thresholds are met:

(a) growth rate of income tax payment for the current tax year compared with the previous tax year must be at least 20 percent;

(b) growth rate of income tax payment for the last quarter of the current tax year compared with the last quarter of the previous tax year must be at least 25 percent;

(c) growth rate of income tax payment for the first quarter of the succeeding tax year compared with the first quarter of the current tax year must be at least 25 percent;

(d) ratio of income tax payment to gross sales/receipts for the current taxable year must be at least equal to that of the previous taxable year;

(e) ratio of income tax payment to gross sales/receipts for the first quarter of the succeeding taxable year must be at least equal to that of the first quarter of the current taxable year; and

(f) ratio of net value added tax or business tax actually paid to gross sales/receipts for the current taxable year must be at least equal to that of the previous taxable year, or the benchmark of the industry, as set by the commissioner of Internal Revenue, whichever is higher.

To NAP or not to NAP?

Given these conditions and privileges, should one immediately avail of this NAP? Caution and logic dictate that one should first do a number of things.

First, it is important to know the details of the program. It is expected that regulations and rules will be issued by the Department of Finance and/or BIR to further clarify this program. Hopefully, these rules will address issues pertaining to the computation of the threshold amount, the extent of the privilege of the exemption from audit, and the provision on disqualification from participation.

On the computational rules, it should be clarified whether the income tax payment to be determined under the NAP is the gross or the net tax payment.

Since the determination of income tax payable is subject to a number of deductions or credits (such as current year expanded withholding tax credits, excess credits or payments coming from previous years, excess minimum corporate income tax, foreign income tax credits, etc), the rules should be clear if these will all be considered in determining the NAP threshold computations.

It should be clarified if a taxpayer can avail of NAP if the taxpayer's accounting period is a fiscal year ending on a date before Dec. 31, 2004.

The EO prescribes an industry net VAT ratio benchmark that must be exceeded to qualify for the NAP. The rules must immediately define these benchmarks so that they can be considered by potential NAP taxpayers.

The rules also must reconcile the apparent illogical condition requiring a future tax payment, such as the first quarter VAT and income tax payment, as a basis for determining a taxpayer's current qualification for NAP.

Clarification is needed on whether the benefit of audit exemption will include other taxes such as withholding tax, documentary stamp tax, improperly accumulated earnings tax, value-added tax, percentage tax and others.

If these are included as part of the benefit, more taxpayers will be interested in participating in this NAP.

The provision on disqualification on further participation is unclear. The EO provides that any participant of NAP who will discontinue participating in, or will not qualify under the NAP in any given taxable year shall be disqualified from further participation. Unless the issue is clarified in the regulations, the threat of disqualification may be a deterrent to those thinking of availing of the NAP.

Cost benefit analysis

After knowing all the rules and details of the NAP, a taxpayer will perhaps evaluate if it will be beneficial to avail of this program. A cost benefit analysis will be helpful. If the benefits exceed the costs, the taxpayer may find it worthwhile to participate in the program; if the costs exceed the benefits, then he may not avail of the NAP.

Costs include the additional amount of income tax that will be paid on top of what is due under regular income tax computation. There is concern by some taxpayers that the additional amount to be paid could be substantial, especially if they have been paying correct and higher taxes in previous years. Since some of the threshold computations for the NAP are based on previous years' tax compliance, it follows that for those who paid higher taxes in the past year will be burdened by a higher payment under NAP.

Taxpayers are also wary of the risks and limitations of the NAP. There are costs that may result from disqualification rules and the possibility of audit of other types of taxes paid.

Finally, those availing of the NAP should be ready to go through what some may consider as a tedious qualification process, involving several computations of thresholds or hurdles. This computational approach is similar to the structure of the Centennial Taxpayer Recognition Program (CTRP) which the BIR implemented last year as a "last priority audit program." Many thought that the CTRP computations were tedious, if not complex, and could have been simplified.

Evidently, the benefit of this program is the exemption from BIR audit and the resulting savings in cost and time. In addition, a taxpayer may no longer fear of discovery of possible tax exposures from a BIR audit because of the no audit feature of the NAP.

With all these considerations, one may decide whether to NAP or not to NAP.

Ayala developments made more accessible

AYALA Land Inc., the country's leading trusted real estate developer, recently opened a marketing showroom that showcases the advantages, features and amenities of its projects even better to potential clients. My Living Space is located at the third level of Greenbelt 3, beside Ayala Land's The Residences at Greenbelt showroom. As the company celebrates more than 16 years of commitment to building quality communities, it hopes to fulfill the dreams of more Filipinos to own their ideal homes by presenting to them its various residential offerings.

"All high-end projects handled by Ayala Land are featured in My Living Space, such as Ayala Westgrove Heights, Ayala Greenfield Estates, Serendra, Montgomery Place, Bonifacio Ridge, E Square, and Bonifacio Triangle," says sales development director Jay Visco. "It's an off-site showroom that enables prospective residents to learn specific information about the projects if they cannot go directly to the site offices immediately."

Visco notes the important potential of casual inquiries at the busy location, which can be developed into strong interest in Ayala Land's projects. "Before we show clients the actual site, we have to show them the concept first. As sellers, we usually take them to the showroom. Once they get interested, we take them to the actual site. By the same token, we can build on the walk-in traffic of the mall for awareness," he adds.

The omnibus showroom is open daily from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., capturing Ayala Land's target market during office hours and even on holidays and weekends. "It becomes more convenient for both sellers and prospects alike to come visit us. We have site officers who will be based at My Living Space daily," says Visco.

According to Visco, 2004 has been a productive year for the company and he forecasts a similarly prosperous year ahead. "It's a buyer's market. There are a lot of projects available for clients at their best value. Now is really the best time to buy property as many banks' loan rates are low," advises Visco. "There will be more projects scheduled for 2005 and the current ones will continue to launch new phases."

My Living Space showcases detailed scale models and photographs of the different developments and their amenities. The showroom also features artworks by Ayala Corp. chairman Jaime Zobel de Ayala.

For inquiries, call 848-5000, log on to www.ayalaland.com.ph, or e-mail ayalasales@ayalaland.com.ph.

Lady helps keep banig weaving tradition alive

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

BASEY, Samar—There are no signs to guide buyers to the Delza's Native Products showroom in this town about 45 minutes away from Tacloban City. But there is no need.

Most people looking for some of the best bags, placemats, floor mats and wall decorations made of tikog, a type of wild grass that grows in rice fields in between harvests, know where the two-story showroom/workshop/house of proprietor Delza Padernal Morales is, anyway.

Delza's shop has been a landmark since 2001 as Delza took the *tikog banig* that this old town is famous for to a new level of design and quality.

Not content with selling just the plain sleeping mats that come either in green or maroon, Delza experimented with different designs and colors she saw in magazines and travels, and translated them into banig works of art.

She also fashioned the tikog banig into items such as handbags, wine containers, coasters and folders, which are popular with the convention organizers in nearby Tacloban, Leyte, who invariably give away tikog items as souvenirs.

"I copy designs. Whenever I see a design that I like, I ask the weavers to do it for me. Since I know how to sew, I know which designs can be done on the banig," Delza says in Waray.

To see her house filled to rafters with tikog items was not what she had in mind when she sewed her first bags, inspired by a bag on the arm of a woman she met while walking in Basey.

"I approached the girl and asked her if I could take a look at her bag. It was the first time that I saw that a bag could be made out of banig. I looked at it and thought to myself that I could do a better job at it," Delza says.

She convinced the lady to sell her the old bag for P100, and she made similar ones with her own design as soon as she got home.

She bought a standard sized banig, went to Tacloban to buy the trimmings, and made her first 12 bags that she sold for P80 each.

Delza told herself that if the bags were bought, she would seriously consider making a business out of it.

She did sell the bags and she never looked back. Not bad for someone who was only forced to go back to her hometown, after 12 years of working in a Kuwaiti hotel, to take care of her ailing father, who eventually died.

She has been in the business for four years, and she is still surprised at how well it turned out.

"I just used the money that I earned from previous sales to buy new mats and make new products. That I learned from my experience in the hotel. I guess I also know how to relate to people, that's why I am still in the business," Delza says.

But more than the robust sales, she says the best part about her business is being able to help keep the tradition of weaving ticog banigs alive.

"More than 50 weavers bring their products here. There are times when I still buy them even if they are not really of good quality because I know how much effort they put into weaving the banig," she says.

Delza explains that weaving a standard size banig measuring 2 meters by 1.6 meters is so painstaking that she feels bad whenever buyers insist on buying products at very low prices.

First, the tikog has to be harvested and dried well during the summer months to retain their naturally light color. The tikog is then pounded to make them flat and cut to a specific, uniform width of about 1/4 inch, before it gets to the weavers, of which Basey has many.

Delza says the weavers do their work at night or in the early hours of the morning for the woven mats to retain their shape. Humidity also affects the color, and causes the tikog to warp.

Thus, it takes a weaver at least a week to complete a single mat, which is sold for about P700, depending on the design.

"I tell the people who come here that weaving a banig is not simple at all, so they have to pay a good price for it," she says.

Fortunately, only a few complain about the price, especially the balikbayans and the handful of foreigners who find their way into Basey.

Popular products are the colored mats, particularly the round ones, which are even more difficult to weave.

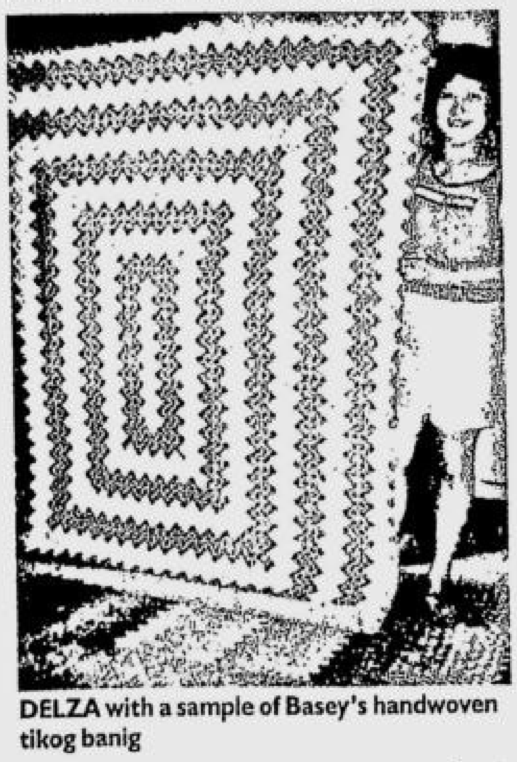
She also accepts orders for mats with specific designs, and she proudly says that many of her products have found their way abroad, particularly to the United States.

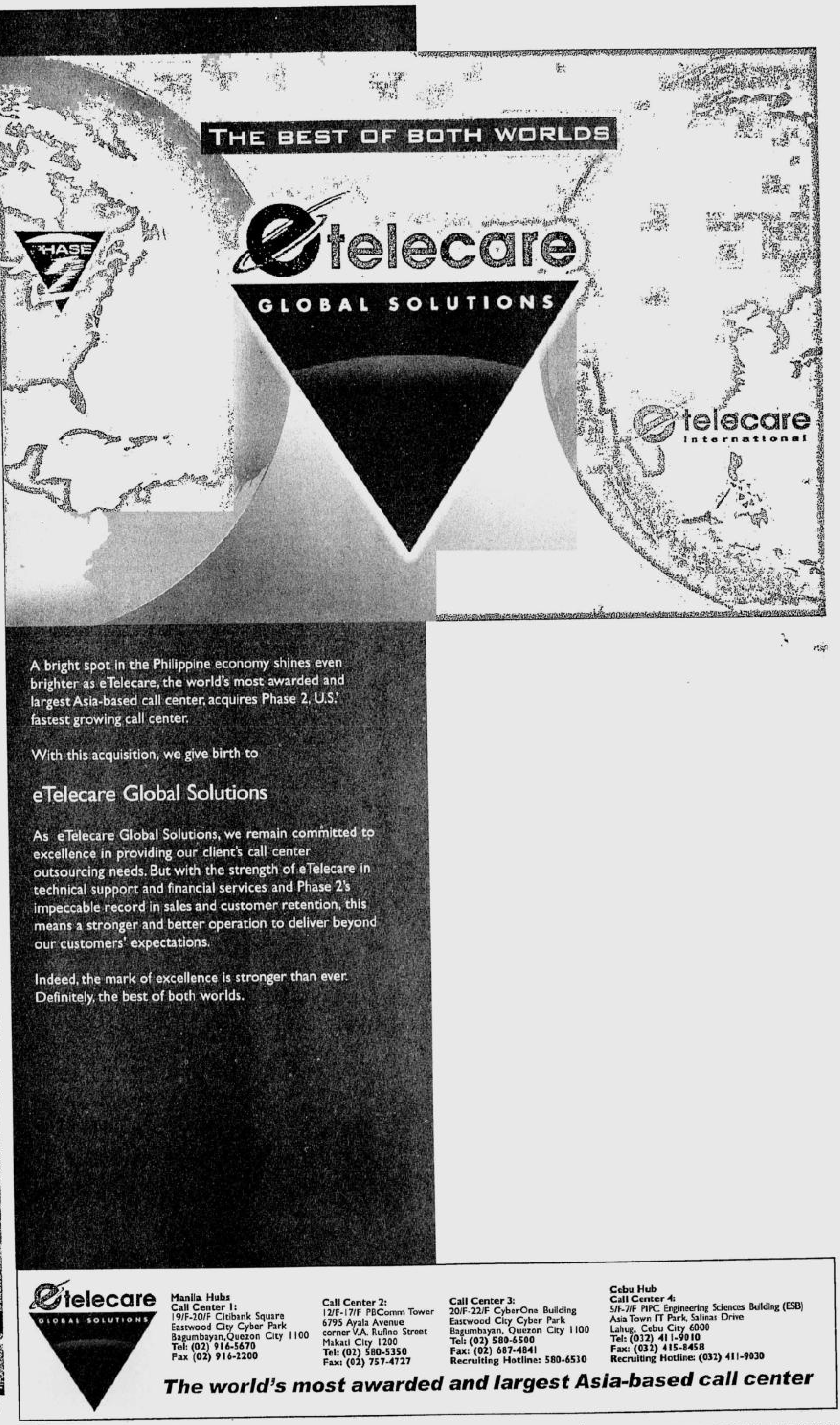
"It is almost automatic. Whenever people go to Tacloban, they pass by my house to get a few items," she says.

Most of the profit, she says, goes to the weavers who now have a reason to pass on their knowledge to their children.

"The weavers are getting old and there was a time when they were no longer teaching their children to weave because nobody was buying their products. With our growing business, we are giving the dying tradition a new lease on life," she says.

DELZA's bags are popular with local and foreign tourists.


DELZA with a sample of Basey's handwoven tikog banig



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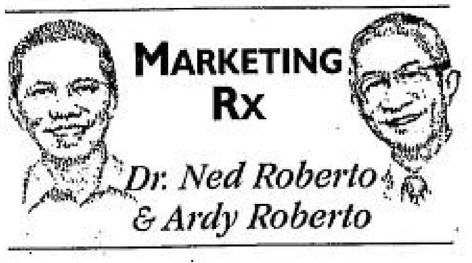
Market your company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs -I



MARKETING Rx

Dr. Ned Roberto & Ardy Roberto

Q: IN FACING up to the demands of their corporate citizenship, many companies have formed foundations (or have hired managers) charged with planning and implementing the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects. In light of the growing and intensifying criticisms about misbehaving corporations like Enron, Worldcom, and many others, the greater population of corporations is suffering unfairly from this public cynicism that is only too quick to generalize to most, if not all, corporations. This greater majority of responsible corporations are now saying and asking: "We've taken a low-key approach to the marketing of our CSR projects. Is this right? How should we be marketing our CSR?"

A: Last Jan. 24, 2005, the senior Marketing Rx-er attended a breakfast conference of the League of Corporate Foundations where Jude Mannion, executive director of the Robin Hood Foundation of New Zealand was the guest speaker. Mannion's fiery and persuasive answer to the question was direct and simple: "Market your CSR (programs) the way you market the introduction of a new product!"

While the materials that Mannion presented were interesting, what was more engaging to the executives of the attending corporate foundations were the questions raised during the open forum and the answers that Mannion gave. We will focus on those questions and the answers given. We will comment along the way.

Audience: All of your (Mannion's) examples are about large corporations. What about the small and medium enterprises who want to do good? If they can't do this individually, can they do this through their association?

Mannion: Small business associations do not have the experience and expertise for this sort of thing. Also, if you do it through an association, the good that comes does not directly go to the company brand.

MRx Comment: At the start of her presentation, Mannion was saying she has finally left corporate life. She's no longer marketing Kellogg and its cereals, Coca-Cola and its beverage, and several others. But it's clear that the corporate and the brand mindset have been deeply ingrained, though unconsciously, in her management DNA. That's what triggered her to link her answer to what should be good for "the company brand." It can be confusing, so let's try to fix this.

Consider Jude Mannion's Robin Hood Foundation and its positioning. Underneath the Foundation's name is the sub-brand: "Because doing good is good for business." And the issue is this: Where is the priority? Doing good first and if that happens to be good for business also, then that would be nice. Or do good only because it's good for business? Which comes first: doing good or doing well in business?

If the priority is to see that all businesses (large, medium, and small) do good, then the good that SMEs want and can only do via its associations should get our full support. There shouldn't be any second thoughts about this. That this will not do much for the brand of the individual members of the association is secondary. In fact, it's a consideration that shouldn't be allowed to come into the trade-off equation and decision.

If you think about it, the large corporation should even be helping the SMEs in this idea by, say, allocating part of their CSR budget to supporting SME associations to get into collective CSR.

There is a precedent model to this type of CSR practice. That's PBSP (Philippine Business for Social Progress). In 1970, member companies of three business associations, namely, the Philippine Council for Economic Development, the Philippine Business Council, and the Philippine Association for Social Action, decided to establish PBSP as an "umbrella" NGO. The concept was to coordinate through PBSP the funds that member companies in the three business associations were contributing for social and economic projects in different parts of the country. PBSP member companies committed themselves to annually contribute 0.6 percent of each company's before-tax net income to PBSP social initiatives and programs. That's an association of big businesses. We're now talking about an analogous association of small and medium businesses.

'New keeper of values'

There's another compelling argument in favor of giving full, unadulterated support to SMEs doing good via their association. This is from one of Mannion's slides. In the slide, Mannion quotes a Van Wishart who predicts that "Business will become the new keeper of values." Surely, that can happen or can take place within a shorter time period if ALL businesses, from small to medium to large, commit to managing their business affairs subject to a redeeming social value as the deciding consideration.

If Mannion actually meant her Foundation stands for doing good first and foremost, here's an unsolicited but sincerely offered MarketingRx for the Robin Hood Foundation to consider. For clarity, the Robin Hood Foundation may want to rephrase its sub-brand to say: "Because doing good is ALSO good for business." Or something to the effect that the first priority is to do good. That doing good may also happen to be good for business is a bonus but not a necessary or concomitant condition.

Audience: If we (corporate foundations) are to market our CSR like the marketing of a new product intro, are you suggesting that we hire CSR managers who are new product marketing managers? What do we do with our current foundation heads? They are mostly retired company senior executives rehired to manage our foundation and its CSR programs? And will young ambitious marketing managers be motivated to make the career shift?

Mannion: If you can show young hotshot marketing managers that the future is in CSR and if the CEO will champion this opportunity, then you can get the right people to manage your CSR and put excitement into what is now coming across as mostly dull marketing of foundations and CSR projects. As it is, even the name and branding of your foundations and CSR projects are so dull. If you were managing a new brand, I'm sure you won't choose a name like the name you've given to your foundation.

MRx Comment: It may be wiser and smarter to look at this issue as a transition process. So plan its taking place as a two-stage process rather than as a big bang single stage change.

Start with the reality that was mentioned; that the heads of corporate foundations and CSR projects happen to be mostly retired executives who do not have traditional marketing and social marketing as their area of expertise. The first part of this statement refers to their strength.

Many have retired from the daily grind of managing ordinary businesses whose social relevance is often vague. Sometimes, many of these businesses' social irrelevance or even harm is clear. The retiring executives feel (rather rightly) embarrassed about this negative side of the business. Given the chance and resources to make amends, they would have no hesitation in getting back to an 8-to-5 work day. Now, these talents are put in charge of projects whose redeeming social values are not only redeeming to their target beneficiaries like the poor or the disabled but redeeming as well to these retired executives. This new mission is inspiring to say the least. It rekindles what is noble in everyone.

The weakness is the lack of social marketing know-how. To those who have the marketing knowledge, the weakness may be the datedness of that know-how. But this is not a formidable weakness. It's a weakness that's not impossible to correct. A good training and sustained mentoring program will effect the needed transformation in many cases. This is the immediate stage and short-term solution.

The longer-term solution is in changing the mindset of product managers and marketing executives—especially those in new product management. Currently, these managers see corporate foundation management and managing CSR "products" as an inferior career goal and a demotion when placed there. They cannot identify with retired senior executives who they perceive as largely laidback foundation heads who got the job because that's a reward for having served the company well and for so long. For new product and marketing managers, the career challenge and reputation to fight and compete for is not in that job.

It is worth mentioning that there are exceptions. The junior MRx-er was a guest at fund raising seminar organized by Venture for Fundraising and met Marian Catedral of Caltex Philippines whose business card says: manager for policy, government and public affairs and Zonito Torrevillas, PR/communications manager of McDonald's Philippines whose job includes running the Ronald McDonald Foundation. Both Catedral and Torrevillas are young, very passionate and based on their presentations at the seminar, are very professional in the way they manage and market their CSR programs. They both have access to the CEOs of their corporations because their CEOs view their CSR programs as very important.

Recognize, celebrate excellence

The new generation of successes among those trained in Phase 1 should contribute to the needed change in mindset. And those successes should be merchandised and publicly rewarded much like, say, our "Management Man of the Year" or "Entrepreneur of the Year" awards. Even with these efforts and its sustenance, this changing of mindset will take time but it will happen. Its taking place in the nearer future will be helped by the CEO's strong endorsement of it. A third contributor can come from education. If business schools will also champion CSR as a major or even as a college or masteral degree, then the necessary triangulation of influencing forces would be completed.

Email your questions and comments to MarketingRx@pldtDSL.net or text us at 0919-314-5412.

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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2005

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Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

LIFESTYLE

C1

MONDAY **ARTS & BOOKS** ◉ TUESDAY **FITNESS** ◉ WEDNESDAY **2BU** ◉ THURSDAY **FOOD** ◉ FRIDAY **FASHION & BEAUTY**

DUNKIN' DONUTS
P35 lang!
LOVE BITES

'Glamazons' redefine sexy

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Sioson San Juan

NEXT to watching the (erstwhile) invincible **Roger Federer** lose to **Marat Safin** in the Australian Open, a heart-stopping sight the past week was that of **Maria Sharapova** drenched in sweat, her button-size nipples traceable on her Nike tennis tank dress.

"Doesn't anyone tell them that their nipples show?" a man watching the action asked me, a tone of fatherly concern—I swear—in his voice.

I really didn't know the answer to that so the next day I phoned Nike Philippines' **Rely San Agustin** to ask if he'd been watching his Nikes in sexy action on the Australian court and what's new in the women tennis line.

While Rely hadn't been watching Sharapova and the other tennis "glamazons," he said that indeed Nike has been continuously combining fabric technology with cutting-edge sports design to produce a tennis line. In fact it now has the **Serena Williams** line.

Tennis stars playing before thousands in the arena and millions more on TV are modern-day gladiators who battle it out all year round. (All right, I'm not only biased, I'm addicted to the game.)

Fashion orbit

Lately, fashion has added a dimension to the game, thanks to Serena's over-the-top style and in my book, the allure of Sharapova and those pretty Russian glamazons. Perhaps not commonly known is the fact that tennis has been in fashion orbit since the first quarter of the 20th century.

Coco Chanel and **Lucien Lelong** liberated women from corseted clothes, in part through loose silhouettes worn on the tennis courts, and designed chic clothes and accessories to wear to the game (e.g. tennis bracelets). To this day, **Karl Lagerfeld** (who perpetuated Chanel into the 21st century) and Prada turn out tennis lines and even rackets and bags.

Of course, in this badminton country, there might not be enough women in tennis to sustain the line on the racks, but one doesn't have to be playing the game to get attracted to what Sharapova, et al are wearing.

Today's tennis glamazons, usually from Russia and France, could give fashion models a run for their money. Sharapova is toned without being muscular, has long fine hair and legs so long she's like a gazelle on court, a gazelle releasing regular grunts and screams. **Anastasia Myskina**, **Daniela Hantuchova** and **Elena Dementieva** are fine-bodied lookers as well.

They define today's concept of glamour for women—active, able-bodied, very confident, competitive. In today's vocabulary, to be glamorous is to be dominant. It is to conquer. It is to bare strength even as they sweat in nerve-racking moments.

That's where the allure is—as they break into sweat. Thus, the nipples. Those tank tops are double-layered, with built-in pads, so that one doesn't have to wear a bra. Yet the tennis glamazons must do such extra-heavy sweating (obvious) that their tanks are drenched.

Varied styles

Lately there's been a parade of sweat-out clothes on court: Sharapova's tank dress slit up to the lower hips to reveal shorts; France's Galovin's low-rise shorts (even tennis has seen the rise of low-rises) that fall right on her hips (never lower) and baby tee, both by Lacoste (I wish Lacoste in Manila would carry more tennis styles); **Venus Williams'** flare tennis skirt, in checker at that, and halter top.

Tennis styles have never been as varied—in cut, design and color. They've gone beyond white, into black and citrus shades, also prints and stripes.

Nike, for instance, explores not only design but also fabric technology. It's just come out with clothes for yoga (tanks and loose pants), dance, kickboxing and of course, tennis.

In the Australian Open Serena launched her clothes and footwear line for Nike. The Serena Williams Collection for Nike is meant to—dig this—"help players transform their look and their game." The colors are vibrant, from citrus green to hot pink. The fabric is Dri-fit, meant to absorb moisture and has mesh to allow ventilation and keep the fabric from clinging to the body.

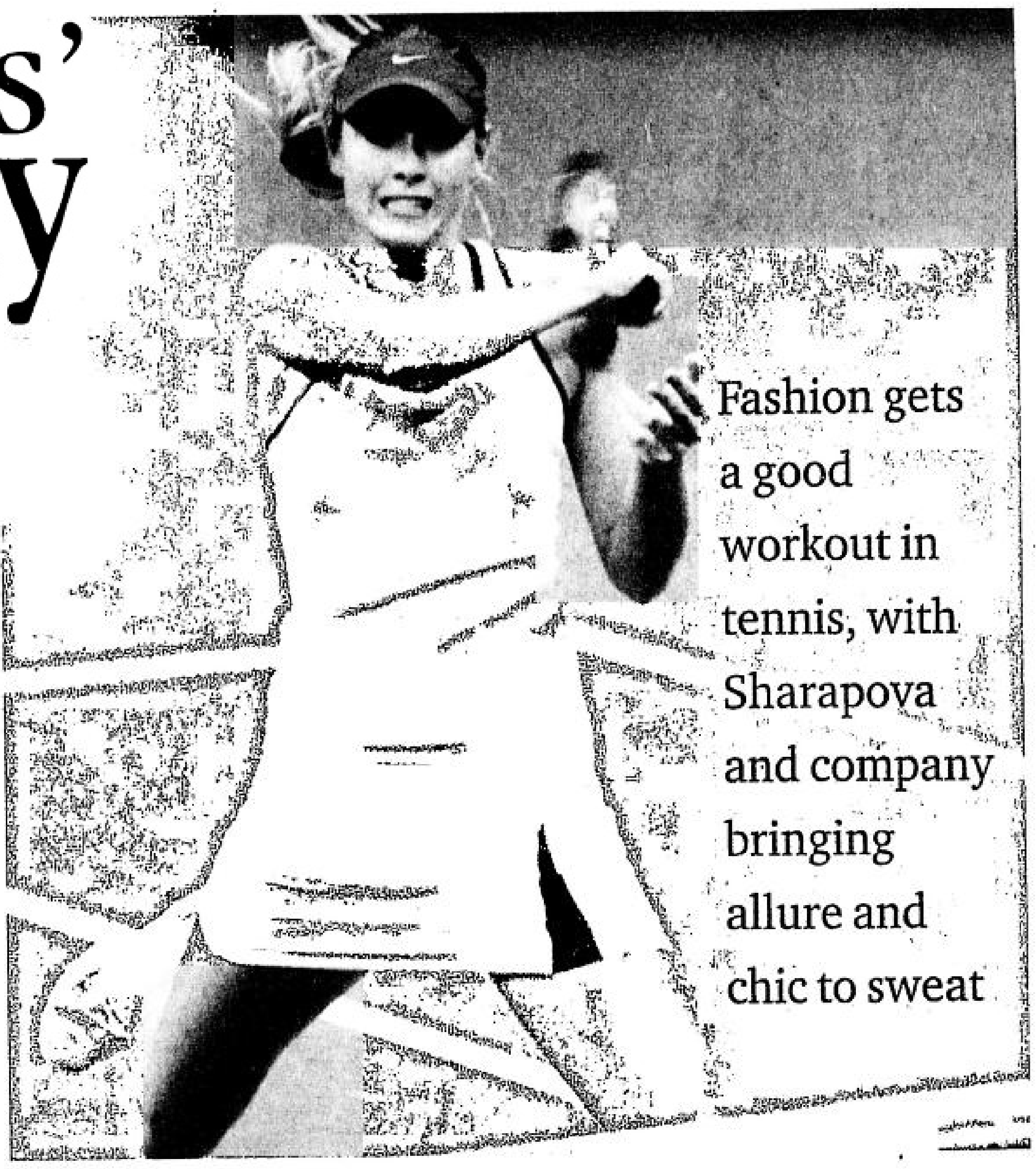
Serena also wore Nike Shox Glamour, which uses Nike Shox technology (so identified with basketball) in tennis, for heel cushioning.

Of course, what takes the cake is Serena's warm-up boots to match her clothes. The boots, meant for muscle compression and protection from muscle vibrations that can travel up the leg during high-impact movement, are still being tested and not yet available on retail.

Sports wear is getting so advanced—from fabrics that absorb sweat and allow air movement, to construction that does away with undergarments altogether—that you watch fashion as you keep an eye on the score. Tennis wear is also baring ample flesh, including Serena's shorts cut so high on the bottom.

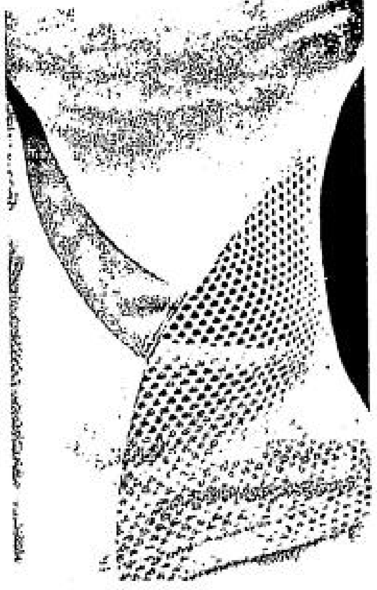
Thanks to Sharapova and the glamazons, tennis wear is redefining sexy. Yes, with grunts to go.

E-mail the author at tsanjuan@skyinet.net



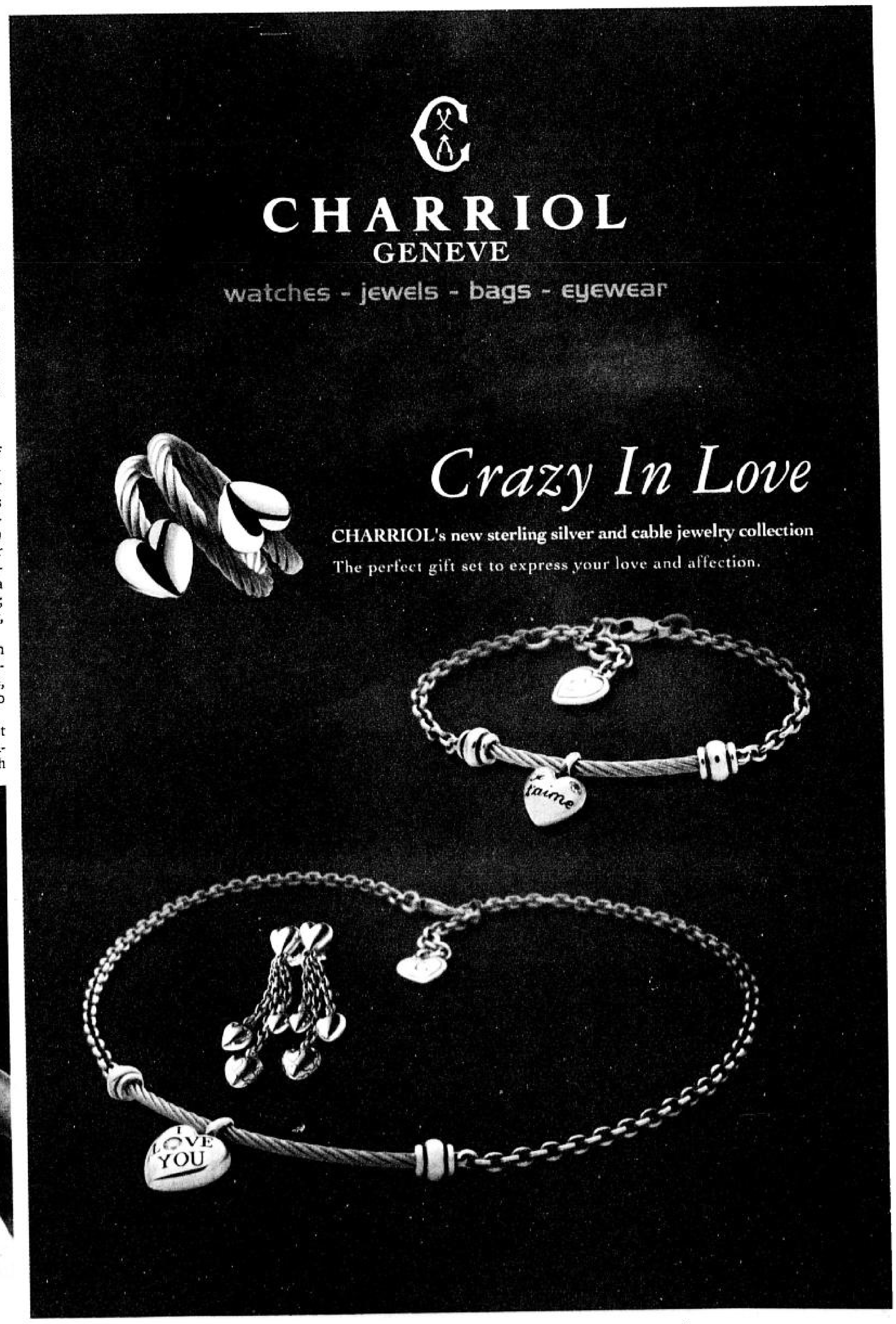
Fashion gets a good workout in tennis, with Sharapova and company bringing allure and chic to sweat

SUPERMODEL material Maria Sharapova



SERENA 2020 Nike mesh is another proof of fabric technology and design.

SERENA 1616, Serena Williams in Serena Williams Collection for Nike shows how tennis has gone from white to citrus.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Top tips

If you're not ready to go all-out "boho," start off by wearing a top with ethnic or other such whimsical details. You can match these with classic bottoms such as jeans or trousers. Printed and embroidered jersey top, P990; not-so-basic white polo with floral beadwork, P990; butter-yellow top with ethnic trim, P990; all from Nullah

Try a little boho

APPLES' PICKINGS

Apples Aberin-Sadhwani

Think gypsy or ethnic flair and you'll get what this chic trend is all about

STYLE-MEISTERS the world over always have something to say about what's in and out for each fashion season. According to Harper's Bazaar, for example, Spring 2005 is all about color, especially turquoise and coral, animal prints or safari-style, wedges, bangles and more metallics.

I'm sure you've heard it all before, if not now, then a couple of seasons ago or just last summer or even the previous season. Although it's fun to follow what's in vogue, it's more interesting (and financially savvy) to create a look that's uniquely you while injecting some current fashion trends into your wardrobe.

"Boho," also known as bohemian chic, is just one of the many trends to resurface this season. Think gypsy or ethnic flair and you'll get what "boho" is all about. You can achieve this by mixing various ethnic prints or loose, flowing Esmeralda-like dresses (of "Hunchback of Notre Dame") or 1970s, hippie-inspired pieces.

As always, you must not take these trends too seriously (unless that's your style) or you run the risk of looking like a wannabe model from page 89 or so of some magazine. So as always, mix trendy pieces with your basics to create a modern look that's more your personality.

Accessories can also play a major part in updating your wardrobe. A printed, embroidered or sequined satchel or tooled leather metallic or bejeweled sandals may be all you need to achieve a "boho" feel.

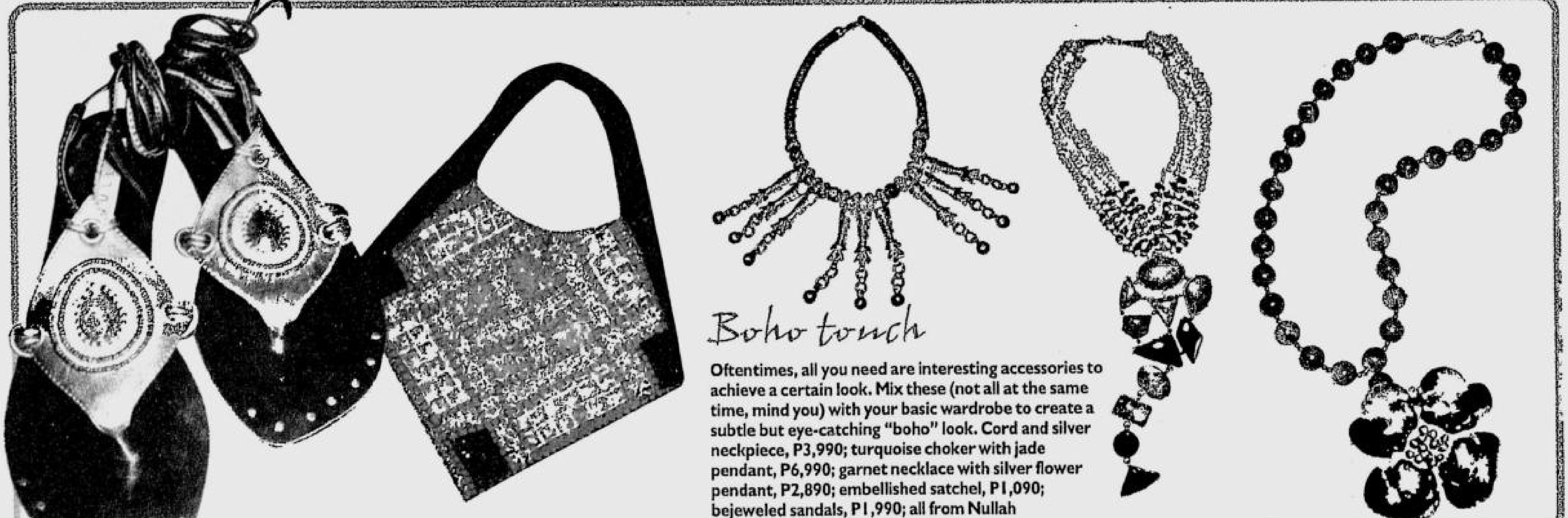
Indian or wooden bangles or chunky neckpieces made of colorful stones mixed with classic clothing can also add striking ethnic touches.

Need a bit of inspiration to release your inner gypsy? Take a peek at these eye-catching pieces and combinations and start creating your own "boho" looks.

E-mail the author at apsadvice@hotmail.com

Skirting the issue

A colorful beaded or embroidered skirt is all it takes to create that "boho" vibe. Wear it with a romantic, soft and flowing cotton top for Esmeralda-like appeal, or match it with a more basic tank- or halter-top for a modern feel. Turquoise beaded wrap skirt, P2,590; brown cotton voile top, P790; multicolor beaded skirt, P2,590; pink cotton voile top, P790; all from Nullah at the Power Plant Mall and at Jupiter Place, Jupiter Street, Bel-Air



Boho touch

Oftentimes, all you need are interesting accessories to achieve a certain look. Mix these (not all at the same time, mind you) with your basic wardrobe to create a subtle but eye-catching "boho" look. Cord and silver neckpiece, P3,990; turquoise choker with jade pendant, P6,990; garnet necklace with silver flower pendant, P2,890; embellished satchel, P1,090; bejeweled sandals, P1,990; all from Nullah

Bags and more to crow about in the Year of the Rooster

BEA Valdes unveils a special collection of festive evening bags at the "Night of Song," a celebration of the Year of the Rooster hosted by HSBC and Asia Society on Feb. 11 at the Makati Shangri-La. The evening will be inspired by the influences of the Song Dynasty, the Renaissance of China, an era of relative peace, growing trade and artistic freedom.

Especially designed for HSBC's Chinese New Year event, the limited-edition bags range from silk jacquards with embellishments, to appliquéd satin bags and silk in fresh pastel shades, as a prelude to her summer collection.

"For this collection, I am using jeweled tones and luxurious fabrics, reflective of celebration and the era of the Song Dynasty when trade was flourishing so much and gorgeous silk was abundant," said Valdes, whose background in industrial and interior design has taken her to pursue her passion of designing one-of-a-kind bags.

"We've always been told that our products have a vintage feel to them, but reworked in contemporary colors and fabrics," Valdes added.

Functional sculpture

Aside from Valdes' bag collection, Jon and Tessy Pettyjohn and colleagues Hadrian and Camille Mendoza will be displaying their unique brand of pottery that is functional and sculptural as well, inspired by the artistic explosion of the Song Dynasty.

Pottery took an amazing turn during the Song Dynasty, shifting from the rigid, ornate and symmetrical to a very liberal, borderless style. There was much experimentation with colors, mixing and matching them according to the artist's fancy and much to the modernist's delight. There were also artists who gave up color altogether, allowing natural stains of the clay to take over while they merely drew their figures upon the pottery using lines and curves but with no assigned colors within them. The result is an art movement as modern as any that can be found today.

Jon and Tessy Pettyjohn are considered the pioneers of Philippine pottery, having experimented with indigenous materials like Pinatubo ash for the last 30 years. Hadrian Mendoza attended school in Washington, D.C., while Camille Mendoza is a graduate of Fine Arts at the University of the Philippines. The Pettyjohns and Mendozas run a pottery school in Garden Square, Makati City.

BAGS by Bea Valdes: jeweled tones and luxurious fabrics reflective of the Song era

For the past two years, HSBC and Asia Society have collaborated on unique Chinese New Year celebration events exclusively for HSBC Premier and corporate customers as well as Asia Society members to promote understanding of culture and diversity and to celebrate a shared Chinese-Filipino heritage.

HSBC's address is The Enterprise Center, Tower1, 6766 Ayala Avenue cor Paseo de Roxas, Makati City 1200, Philippines.

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Ferrero Rocher
Heart Shape
100g
₱186.00/box

Fuji Apple #88 ₱52.50/kg • Sinta Papaya ₱18.90/kg China Ponkan ₱42.00/kg
Kiat-Kiat (Tiny Ponkan) ₱73.50/kg Pineapple Medium ₱21.00/kg
Egg Plant ₱25.20/kg • Hot Pepper (Pansigang) ₱68.25/kg • Okra ₱31.50/kg
Sampaloc ₱19.95/kg • Camote ₱13.65/kg • Calamansi ₱30.45/kg
Taiwan Pechay ₱52.50/kg • Spring Onion ₱94.50/kg
Sayote Fruits ₱10.50/kg

Chainmarts
Chicken Leg Quarter
₱70.50/kg

Don Luciano
Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah
75cl
₱244.50/bot

Milo
Chocolate Drink 1kg ₱151.95/bag
600g ₱94.65/bag
300g ₱48.45/bag

Purefoods
Carne Norte 150g ₱17.00/can
Beefies Hotdog 1kg ₱98.70/bag

CDO
Meat Loaf, Beef Loaf
150g ₱12.15/can Cheesedog
1kg ₱130.95/bag 500g ₱68.15/bag

Hershey's
Milk Choco w/ Almond Nuggets, Cookies 'n Creme Nuggets, Extra Creamy Milk Choco w/ Almond Nuggets, Milk Chocolate
Nuggets 235g ₱136.40/bag

Nestle Ice Cream
Supreme Double Dutch
1.9L ₱182.75/tub
3.8L ₱357.75/tub

Dari Creme
Classic / Buttermilk 225g ₱21.80/pc
Magnolia Ice Cream
Gold (All Flavor) 1.9L ₱182.75/tub
3.8L ₱357.75/tub

Taster's Choice
Coffee Regular (Red)
198.5g ₱290.50/plastic bot

Sunsweet
Prune Juice 1.4L ₱137.75/bot
ReaLemon
Lemon Juice 450ml ₱90.50/bot

Loacker
Gran Pasticceria Creme Noisette, Cappuccino, Noir Orange 100g ₱93.20/box
Quadratini Napolitaner, Kakao, Vanille
250g ₱92.20/box

Toblerone
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200g ₱181.85/box
330g ₱274.55/box

Kean Juice
Orange, Apple, Grapefruit, Five Fruit Cocktail, Lemon Aid
1L ₱55.10/pk

Planters
Peanut Butter Creamy, Crunchy
340.2g ₱74.50/bot 510.3g ₱100.50/bot
Crumpy
Bread Spread Duo, Banana 225g ₱69.00/bot

Log Cabin
Syrup Lite 720ml ₱175.50/bot
Regular 1.08L ₱232.50/bot

Nissin Cup Noodles
Beef, Shrimp, Chicken, Salsa Picante Beef, Salsa Picante Chicken, Salsa Picante Shrimp
63.8g ₱27.50/cup

Campbell's
Chicken Noodle 304.8g ₱37.00/can
Comstock
Blueberry Pie Filling 595.4g ₱100.50/can

S&W
Whole Corn 432.3g ₱25.50/can
Cream Corn 418.2g ₱25.50/can

Nabisco
Chips Ahoy 453.6g ₱130.50/pk
Reduced Fat 510.3g ₱155.50/pk
Chunky 425.3g ₱138.50/pk
Oreo Reduced Fat 510.3g ₱138.50/pk

Heinz
Tomato Catsup 396.9g ₱60.50/bot
Libby's
Tomato Catsup 1020.6g ₱118.50/bot

A-1
Steak Sauce Regular, Sweet & Tangy, Bold & Spicy, Thick & Hearty 283.5g ₱150.50/bot

Tome
Sardines Tomato Sauce
Spicy Pickle, Vegetable Oil
125g ₱49.50/can
Sardines Olive Oil 125g ₱59.50/can

Jolly
Mushrooms Pieces & Stems
400g ₱20.75/can
Whole Kernel Corn 425g ₱21.50/can

Falcon's Valley
(Fruit Cocktail 822g Plus Lychee 565g) Value Pack
₱89.50/pk

A&W
Rootbeer Regular 360ml ₱17.00/can
Dr. Pepper
Diet 360ml ₱18.50/can

Good Life
Vermicelli 250g ₱15.00/pk
Rauch
Nativa Green Tea w/ Lemon
1L ₱55.00/tetra

Planters
Sweet Roast Cinnamon Almond, Pecan, Honey Cashew, Peanut Vanilla
Almond, Cashew, Peanut 2[illegible] 6g ₱180.50/can
Planters
Honey Roasted Peanuts 340.2g ₱126.50/bot
Mixed Nuts 340.2g ₱190.50/bot

Knox
Gelatine 226.8g ₱375.50/box
Yame
Pudding, Mixed Fruit 453.6g ₱25.50/box

Olsen's
Pullman Loaf 550g ₱27.00/pk
Whole Wheat Loaf 550g ₱31.50/pk

Cheetos
Corn Puffs Twisted
255.2g ₱88.20/pk

Vochelle
Assortment Tin Songket Mas, Batik Ayu, Batik Ria
260g ₱199.50/can

Carnation
Coffeemate French Vanilla, Creamy Chocolate, Irish Cream, Hazelnut
226.8g ₱94.25/bot
Coffeemate Latte Creations Classic, Vanilla
250g ₱162.50/bot

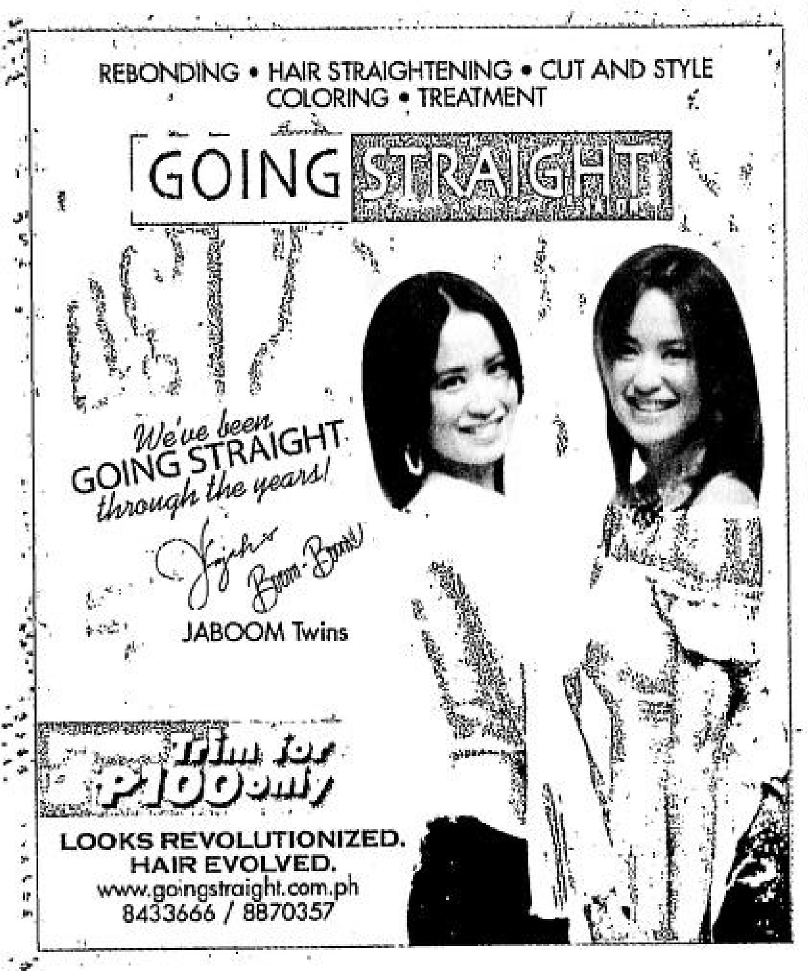
Tide
Plus Powder 1kg ₱149.70/bag
Downy
Natural Fabric Conditioner 1L ₱115.20/bg
Pantene
Total Care Conditioner 200ml ₱89.60/bot
Hair Fall Control Shampoo 400ml ₱161.00/bot

Colgate
Fresh Confidence Plus Whitening
150ml ₱61.75/tube 100ml ₱42.10/tube
60ml ₱26.45/tube

Johnson's
Soft Wash Orig, Fresh, Calming
100ml ₱45.00/bot 200ml ₱85.00/bot
400ml ₱122.40/bot Soft Lotion Calming
100ml ₱48.85/bot 200ml ₱86.25/bot

Downy
Ultra Simple Pleasures Vanilla & Lavender, Water Lily & Jasmine, Morning Glory, Honeysuckle 1.66L ₱365.75/jug

Trumpy
Baby Liquid Soap, Baby Shampoo 250ml ₱55.50/bot
Baby Body Lotion 260ml ₱67.70/bot
Baby Eau De Cologne 25ml ₱70.50/bot
Pure 'n Gentle
Baby Wipes Travel Pack 50's ₱60.00/pk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WISH Upon a Wizard, a program of Enchanted Kingdom, recently donated a check to the pediatric wards of the Philippine General Hospital. Photo shows ABS-CBN's news anchor Karen Davila, EK president Mario Marmon and EK assistant vice president for retail operations, Susan Romero with kids from PGH.

Furniture store wins award

BLIMS fine furniture recently received the Outstanding Filipino Retailer of the Year Award for 2004. This award recognizes Filipino retailers who have achieved success in terms of growth and practices business ethics. BLIMS has branches in Greenbelt 1 and Glorietta in Ayala Center, Ayala Showroom, Robinsons Galleria in Ortigas, Festival Supermall in Alabang, SM Southmall, Alabang Town Center, Robinsons Place Ermita, Robinsons Place Novaliches, Greenhills Shopping Center, Ayala Market! Market! and Ayala Center Cebu.

GOINGS ON

CONSULTATIONS. Beatrice Benezra and Lodie Levallet from J.F. Lazartigue Paris will hold hair consultations today and tomorrow at J.F.Lazartigue outlet, Wellness Zone, 5/F Shangri-La Plaza Mall. On Feb. 6-7, they will be at the JFL outlet, Level R1, Power Plant Mall, Rockwell Center, Makati. Call 8980921/ 6337083.

FESTIVAL. Eastwood City holds the Chinese New Year Psychic Festival today until Feb. 9. To be featured are the country's best psychics and free prosperity lectures. Chinese products and charms will be available. Call 6876770 to 74.

LION DANCE. Robinsons Malls welcomes the Year of the Rooster with a lion and dragon dance on Feb. 8. Acrobats and dancers will roam around the malls from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

SEMINAR. Corban Learning Center will hold a seminar on English grammar, conversation and business writing starting Feb. 5, 2-5 p.m. Corban is located on the ground floor, MB Aguirre Bldg., President's Ave. cor Elizalde St., Sucat, Parañaque. Call 8426665/ 8093050.

REUNION. Calling all high school alumni of St. Scholastica's College-class 1955. A golden jubilee celebration will be held Feb. 6 at St. Scholastica's College in Manila. Call Sonia Ner at 8423649; Angge Soriano, 3742170; Feli Deleña, 7258105.

CONCERT. SMART Infinity will sponsor Russell Watson's concert on Feb. 10 at the PICC Plenary. Also featured are Ryan Cayabyab and the San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra.

CONCERT. The Miriam College High School Glee Club and Cultural Classical Dance Club will have a joint concert on Feb. 11, 7 p.m. Titled "Timeless," it will be held at UP Abelardo Hall Auditorium.

FESTIVAL. Power Plant Mall in Rockwell, Makati presents activities to welcome the Year of the Rooster until Feb. 13. Today and tomorrow, 10 a.m.-10 p.m., mallgoers can find out about their future based on stellar positions and planet alignments. On Feb. 9, feng shui expert Charlie Chao will be available for consultation. Just present a single receipt of P2,000, which will also entitle the customer to a free prosperity coin. At 3 p.m., Feb. 9, a dragon will roam the grounds of Rockwell Center, followed by two lions at 5 p.m.

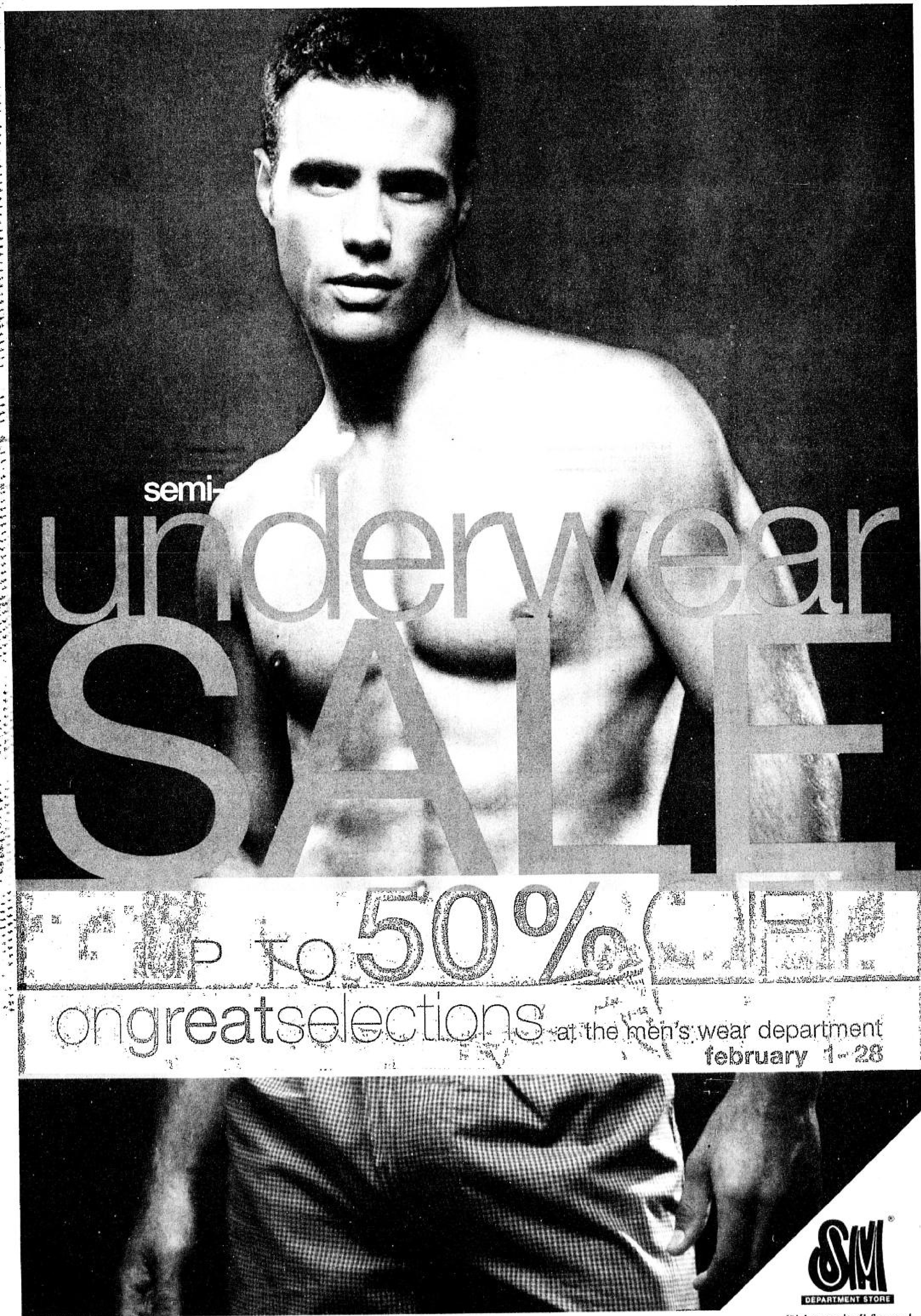
FAIR. The annual Baby Fair is ongoing until Feb. 28 at Sta. Lucia East department store. A free VCD on child care will be given away to the first 100 mothers to present a P1,000 worth of purchase receipt of any infant or maternity products. Show off your baby for a chance to win cash and gifts from Farlin and Giant General Merchandise in the Baby Shots photo contest. If your baby is between 6 and 18 months old, dress him/her up in any costume and send his/her 8R size photo with a photocopy of the infant's birth certificate and P300 single purchase receipt of any baby product. Entry forms are available at the Customer Service department. Call 6815401.

JOB FAIR. The Call Center Philippines 2005 Job Fair will be held on March 19-20 at the Expo Trade Hall of Festival Mall, Alabang. This event focuses on the recruitment and selection of call center professionals. Call 8250804/ 8253482.

WORKSHOP. Design Syndicate presents Design Unplugged. This fundamental graphic design workshop is an intensive four weeks program, and is open to all interested with proficiency in any graphic design software (Photoshop, Illustrator, PageMaker, InDesign and Freehand, etc.). Registration is ongoing for the following batches: Feb. 26, April 9 and May 7. Call 7184700/ (0920) 9276856 or e-mail dsyndicatemanila@yahoo.com.

BALL. The American Association of the Philippines will hold the 56th George Washington Birthnight Ball pn Feb. 26 at Charles Parsons Ballroom and Gardens, Chancery of the US Embassy, Roxas Boulevard, Manila. The event's dress code is strictly formal: black tie or barong for men, and ball gown for women. Call 8925198/ 8922510.

SEMINAR. A seminar/workshop on Deepening Your Roots will be held on Saturday mornings and afternoons for four sessions. Call 8154938/ 8156925.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Per DTI-NCR Permit No.0186, Series of 2005

LIFESTYLE

FASHION for the budget-conscious /D4

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inquirer life name/city/message to
2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Win a trip to Hong Kong for 2

READERS of the PDI Lifestyle section have a chance to win a trip for two to Hong Kong courtesy of the Hong Kong Tourism Board. Simply answer in not more than five sentences the question "Why is Hong Kong the ideal place to celebrate the Chinese New Year?" E-mail your entry, along with your name, date of birth, address, phone number, to hkchinesenewyear@perceptions-inc.com.

Deadline is 11:59 p.m. of Feb. 12, 2005. Sorry, no hand-delivered or faxed entries, please.

Five entries will be picked to each win a special gift item from HKTB. The best entry wins the grand prize trip for two to Hong Kong. Entries will be judged according to creativity (30 percent), originality (30 percent) and content (40 percent).

Glamming up Chinoys

Story on page D3

IT'S not easy, but several Chinese-Filipino designers thrive despite their rich clientele's exacting demands.

Enter the lion

Once an entertainment exclusive to nobles, the Chinese lion dance has become a popular form that transcends race and borders

FEW festivals or events offer more lively, action-packed excitement than those that are launched with a colorful lion dance.

In Hong Kong, a lion dance is a key feature at opening ceremonies, the launch of a new business, sporting events and festivals, especially the Chinese New Year, when the dance is performed to evoke good fortune for the coming year.

The lion dance, which consists of a series of exhilarating movements, is believed to have originated from the time of the Tang dynasty (AD 618-906). Legend has it that one night an emperor had a dream in which a strange looking animal that resembled a lion saved his life. Since the animal that saved the emperor in his dream looked like a lion, it quickly became a symbol of good luck throughout China. It was believed that a dancing lion chased away evil spirits. As lions are not native to China this explains why the symbolic lions used for dancing acquired the characteristics of the Chinese dragon and phoenix.

While many appreciate the skills of lion dancing, few know the meanings that lie behind the carefully choreographed movements or the ancient traditions.

Performers who make the lion move need to train hard to achieve the precision and skill required to perform the intricate maneuvers.

In its original form the dance was a lifelike portrayal of a lion expressing various emotions and mannerisms, such as fur-licking, scratching, head-swinging, tail wagging, bowing and rolling over. Gradually these movements were expanded to include daring acrobatic skills, such as balancing on narrow beams, climbing ladders and catching performers in mid-air.

In Hong Kong, a lion dance can feature either the "South Lion" or "North Lion" style of dance.

The major difference between the two styles lies with the form of artistic expression. The south style tends to accentuate the lion's emotional gestures, whereas the north style is more action-oriented.

The lions also have a different appearance; the body of the northern lion is usually covered in hair, except for the head and looks more lifelike. The southern lion is made from multi-coloured pieces of linen and looks far removed from a real lion.

The lion itself also varies in size and can be operated by either one or two people.

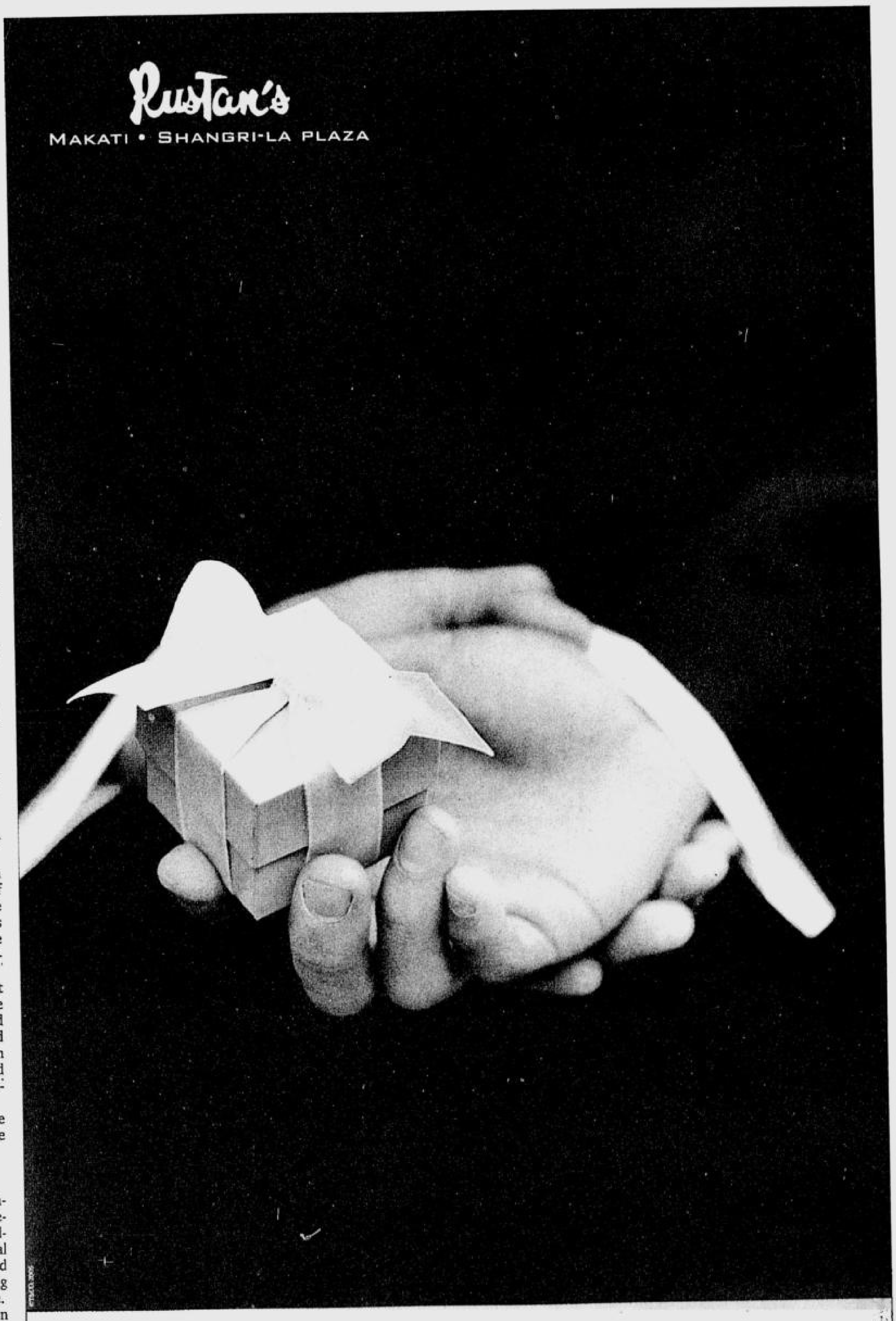
Challenging moves

According to veteran performers, mastering the artistic skills requires no formal training, although a background in martial arts helps in maintaining a good posture while the challenging moves are being put into practice.

Exponents of the South Lion Dance style need strong arms to control the head and manipulate the facial expressions such as rolling the eyes. A two-man operated lion requires the performer at the rear to have quick reactions in order to achieve perfect coordination and maintain visual impact.

There are also taboos and rituals to be observed. For instance, new lions need to be blessed and brought to life. This is done with an eye-dotting ceremony; sitting on the accompanying drums or raising the lion's head higher than the roof of a temple are considered acts of disrespect.

Lion-dance performers from around the world now regularly gather in Hong Kong to take part in international competitions where they delight crowds with their exhilarating rolls and jumps. No matter if the competition is North or South style the tournament always features breath-taking performances that guarantee to be crowd-pleasers!



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CLOSE pals Joana Lhuillier, Czarina Ablaza with husband Jofe Syquia and Charles Lhuillier

LADIES of the diplo set: Punnee Taylor, Valentina Nebogatova, Johanna Montero and Jo-lynne Sutherland

OUR gang of four: Top cardiologist Dr. Randy Francisco and wife, Philippine Tatler and Harrison Plaza's brilliant entrepreneur Irene Martel, with Karen Santos and *moi*

NINI Licaros and Vicky Cadungog

PALS forever: Mon and Justa Tantoco, Sen. Loi Ejercito, Mellie Ablaza and Karen Macasaet

TURKISH Ambassador Tanju Sumer and wife, eye-catching beauty Artemis

MARC Ablaza with wife, pretty-pretty Tessa Jacomina

Parties that sate the wildest party desire

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using Kodak EasyShare SYSTEM

GLAMOUR and glitter dazzled the night, *palanggas*, when Cosmo Manille's society celebrated the Ablazas' super Christmas bash at the Manila Polo Club. The 300 or so invitees, swathed in shimmering silks and gossamer chiffons, feathered and bejeweled, sashayed into the razzle-dazzle of light and tinsel.

Welcoming the chi-chi hotshots were business magnate and car collector **Louie Ablaza**, and his wife, the honorary consul of Guatemala in Manila, ultra-glamorous socialite **Mellie Ablaza**.

The Ablazas' heirs, **Marc, Czarina** and talented interior designer **Junjun**, helped in their own way to make the bash a soaring success.

Marc, the champion racer-son of the Ablazas, was the perennial grand master of ceremonies. Czarina performed a super surprise number with her pals, while Junjun, as always, created fantastical settings.

Enjoying a grand time were society's grand ladies, such as philanthropist **Imelda Cojuangco, Letty Syquia**, consul **Helen Ong**, consul **Fortune Ledesma, Chloe Periquet** and **Cez Manalo**.

It was like a meeting of the UN, dahlings, with practically the whole diplomatic corps represented, such as Ambassador and Mme. **Christian Krepela** of Austria, Ambassador and Mme. **Saber Mansour** of Egypt, Mme. **Agnes de Kok** of the European Union, plus many others of the high-brow circle.

The Polo Club's fantastic chefs prepared an excellent and endless buffet table which contained various cheeses, smoked salmon, sashimi, roast beef, luscious *lechon* and roast calf, and calorific desserts such as eclairs, tarts, plus, plus... They were laid out on all the sides of the ballroom for all of us to dig into. And believe me, everyone did. Yes, *palanggas*, wine and booze flowed like a flowing stream, while water fizzled.

Après dinner, for more classy entertainment, the UP Singing Ambassadors with chorale director **Ed Manguiat** belted out nostalgic Christmas carols. Top dance choreographer **Budjing Danao** with southern gent, **Mari Lacson**, led the bevy of divas to a roaring rush to the dance floor, where the invitees rocked the hall to intensity nine, to the swinging music of **Marcy David** and his orchestra. The Ablazas, meanwhile, wished everyone a razzle-dazzle holiday that left me completely exhausted, *palanggas*.

Pen frolic

"Parties are just so much more fun when you enjoy it with all these beautiful people," gushed this grand lady from South Forbes, ablaze in her ruby and diamond parure. "And I don't mind the crush of people at all. It just makes things a little more... sweaty." This she said with a naughty little shiver.

And, *palanggas*, she definitely had no cause to complain when the "crush of beautiful people" crowding the grand lobby of The Peninsula Manila had enough chi-chi pedigree (ancien, nouveau and dubious, take your pick), bank accounts and glitzy rocks—and some of them pinned, tucked, sucked and pulled bodies, that would have sent **Liz Smith** into spasmodic heaven 10 times over in social-climbing approval, *palanggas*.

The whole of toute, Manille flocked to the Peninsula Manila's super renowned New Year's Eve Ball, to party, party and party some more—and welcome the brand-new year.

Ladies in their gowns (and industrial-strength rocks) and mega-gentlemen in black tie or barong Tagalog, filled the lobby and the hotel's popular restaurants. This definitely was one evening where one was guaranteed a well-dressed crowd.

And they were seated in strategic positions, which allowed the people watchers to check out each guest, at least once during the course of the evening, with some of them witnessing a parade of the "best of the best" in New Year's Eve finery.

You just have to hand it to the Pen, guys. They know how to party extravagantly, wholeheartedly and unabashedly, for one grand night of a year.

Another New Year... another spectacular bash at The Peninsula Manila... another thousand or so Manileños whose partying wishes had been sated... well, at least for another 12 months until the next one, *palanggas*.

MELDY Cojuangco, hostess with the mostest Mellie and husband Louie Ablaza, and Rosita Lesaca

ALLAN Tengco and Marietta Santos

JO-LISA's top beauty and brains, Joanne Salgado

EYE-CATCHING Southern lady Aurora Lapuz Sagaz

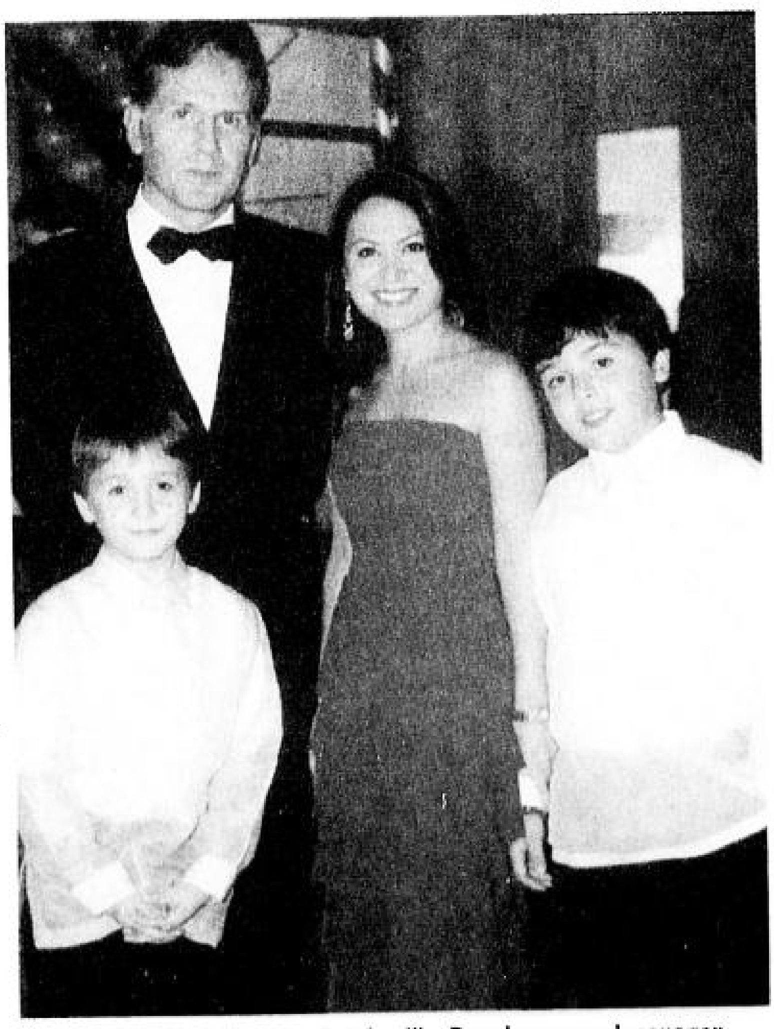
MARIVIC Tengco, Fr. Johanne Libart, Junjun Ablaza and Czarina Ablaza Syquia

GERMAN Ambassador to Brunei Conrad Capell, popular gentleman PM Lim, Lilo Capell and adorable Madeline Lim

LET'S party on: (seated) Marissa Fenton, Yoly and Serge Ayson; Gunther Matschucks, Vicky Assad and Joanne Matschucks

CHIC, low-profile society personalities: Vilie Ponce, Tony and Marietta Cuyegkeng, glamorous Gyn-gyn Quiazon and husband Orly

ALL in the famille: The De Kok clan—Bernard, Sabrina, Agnes with husband, Ambassador Johannes, Sanja and Otto, enjoying the New Year's party at the Pen



THE PENINSULA Manila's first famille: Popular general manager David Batchelor, his wife, super headturner Marilu Toda, and their kids William and James

MOM and son: Daniel with mother, glamorous Doody Menchaca Tuason

EAST meets West: Beautiful twosome Rayner Vintervoll and Cathrine Skanosen

MARTIN and Liz Lathrop-Gerber

SO in love: Golf champions Boling Tuason and husband Vic Reyes

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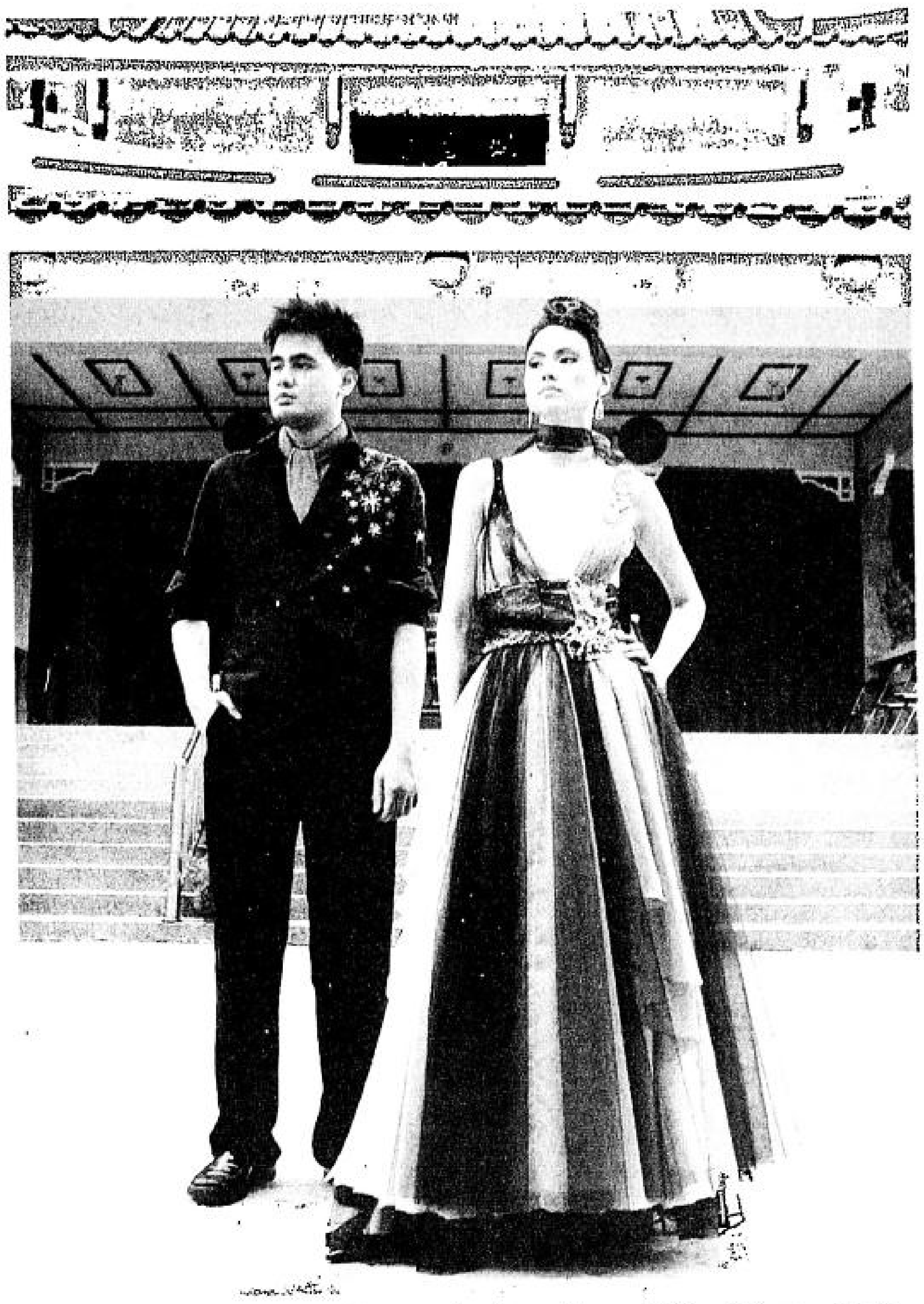
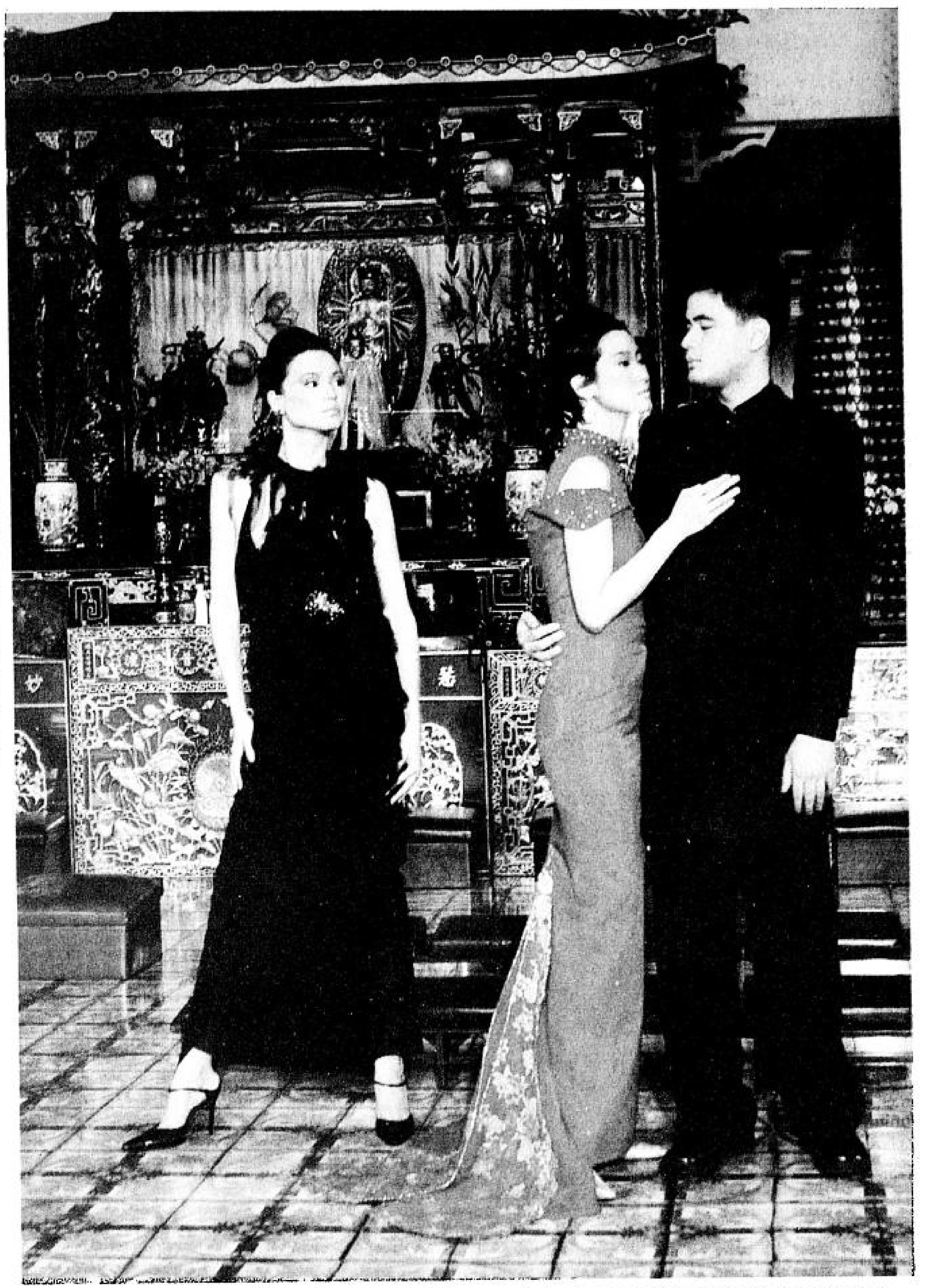


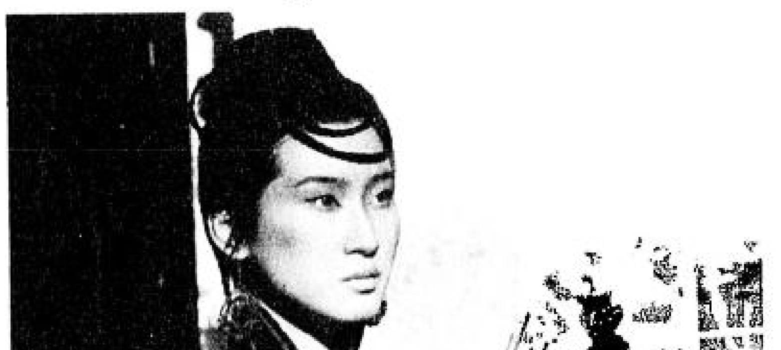
JEROME Ang has fashioned a bouffant gown in yellow and green chiffon with layers of black tulle below and above the skirt on Ivy. Dax wears the designer's dark-blue overlap shirt with hand-embroidered flowers.



PETER Lim infuses a number of interesting elements in the women's classic gowns. On Ivy, he does a draped black chiffon number accented with distressed strips of tulle and Swarovski brooch. Gayle slips into a red halter-neck silk chiffon column with silk shantung detail on the skirt. Dax wears dark wool-blend pants and suit with mandarin collar.

Glamming up Chinoys

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Chito Vecina



JING Chua draws inspiration from nature in this printed camel dress of jersey and combined with a green velvet shrug. Green, orange and red (as always), lucky colors in the Year of the Rooster, are captured in the outfit's floral prints.

WHEN it comes to made-to-order clothes, perhaps no one can be as demanding and as difficult to deal with than Chinese-Filipinos. There seems to be no Chinese word for minimalism. Bright colors are still the trend in clothes, with every imaginable embellishment thrown in.

"And not just any embellishment will do," says Chinoy fashion designer Peter Lim. "They don't want stuff they normally see from other designers. They won't usually go for minimalist designs that have now become de rigueur in Hollywood. Their idea of getting their money's worth is to wear something more elaborate."

Take it from Lim and his two Chinoy colleagues, who have had more than their fair share of amusing stories about dealing with their exacting but wealthy clientele.

"Each creation should be distinct," says Jing Chua. "I can't blame some Pinoy designers if they've become wary of dealing with the Chinese. It's part of our culture and business orientation that less isn't necessarily more."

Missing the mark

And if you think Pinoys are meticulous about fitting, wait until you deal with the typical Chinoy. She won't think twice about having an entire gown altered or revised should it fall short of her expectations.

"What's passable to the Pinoy more often than not hardly makes the cut to the Chinoy," adds Jerome Ang. "Some are bothered by the slightest fold in the fabric whenever they do something as normal as moving. In frustration, I've been tempted at times to suggest they wear something made of steel instead."

Ang remembers the time he had to wrack his brains out to come up with an ideal style for an impossible client, whose ultimate fantasy was to wear a gown with a tube bodice despite not being—shall we say svelte enough to pull it off? He ultimately found a way to give in to her request without making her look like a giant fried dumpling.

"If they insist on something that resembles the color of lightning, then you have no choice but to produce it," says Chua. "But no matter how weird their demands are, it doesn't give you an excuse to produce a sloppily finished product."

Instead of shirking from such near-impossible requirements, the three seem to have thrived through the years. After all, not only do today's Chinoys have the much-vaunted spending power to make such demands, they're also quite loyal.

"By slowly and patiently building a reputation," says Chua, "you're more or less assured of a steady stream of clients from members of the entire clan. It has become quite common for us Chinoy designers to dress up generations of women from the same family."

And most Chinoys won't hesitate to tell others who designed their "fabulous" gowns, unlike Pinoys who are too secretive of such information.

JING'S idea of the quintessential Chinoy gown comes with a sheer kimono-sleeve jacket with mandarin collar. The skirt is embellished with flowers of gold lamé.

Cost-conscious

Chinoys may have the money, but like Pinoys they also love a good bargain. Gone are the days when women were willing to pay a fortune for an outfit. Even rich families, says Lim, have become cost-conscious nowadays. That's why designers like him often find themselves justifying their relatively steep price tags vis-à-vis cheaper mass-produced gowns from China and Korea.

On a positive note, younger, well-traveled generations of Chinoys have become much more adventurous dressers. They've begun to realize that there are other auspicious colors beyond red and gold. Not a few have in fact started to break free from such age-old fashion taboos as wearing black on special occasions. White is no longer associated with mourning.

In this series of photo shoots, for instance, gowns range from green to red, orange to gold, black to white—considered lucky shades as Chinese the world over usher in the Year of the Rooster. It's the oldies, says Lim, who still need some coaxing.

Peter Lim, Jing Chua and Jerome Ang are at the forefront of couture for Filipino-Chinese women

WHITE need no longer be for mourning, says Jing. He has fashioned a strapless jersey column with floral beadwork and bias-cut extension draped below the shoulders.

"It's really a never-ending process of education," he adds. "But it's heartening to see that they're starting to appreciate the fact that we produce one-of-a-kind outfits with their personalities and figures in mind."

Despite differences in age, background and design sensibilities, the three agree on the importance of customer satisfaction. Nor do they find being branded as a Chinoy designer limiting. On the contrary, it's an advantage as it inspires them to come up with something original in a business as competitive as couture.

"Once you've earned their trust," says Lim, "Chinese-Filipino clients feel that they're in good hands. And since we can talk with each other right away, there's no communication barrier."

Years in business

Lim, who took up clothing technology at the University of the Philippines, has been in the business for almost 15 years now. Unlike Chua, whose clientele is composed almost entirely of Chinese, half of Lim's patrons are Filipinos. He further honed his skills by taking up pattern-making under the late Rey Villa.

JING'S halter-neck column of red velour has several "lucky" details: gold-embroidered rooster figure from which flows several jersey extensions that represent prosperity.

Chua, the most senior of the three, has been designing for over 20 years now. He'd been drawn to fashion ever since he could remember, but he took up accounting in San Beda College in deference to his father. Soon after graduating, however, he joined veteran couturier Aureo Alonzo as an apprentice.

"I'm not at all threatened by the emergence of young designers," says Chua. "When these women grow old, most of them will come to me since the bulk of my clientele is 40 and up. I would like to believe that my clothes are classic pieces. A designer is neither too old nor too seasoned to learn and apply new techniques."

Ang, a fine arts graduate of University of Santo Tomas, originally wanted to do interiors until doing clothes got the better of him. Of the three, he has been considered the most avant-garde by virtue of his youth. He has been running a shop catering mostly to Chinoys in Binondo for seven years now.

The designer further studied at the College of St. Benilde, where one of his teachers was veteran fashion great Inno Sotto. He further took up pattern-making under Shannon Pamaong at St. Scholastica's College.

"I'm more into weddings now," he says. "I've taken part in quite a number of shows, which are good PR opportunities, but the real money is in weddings. Despite my modest accomplishments, I feel that I still have a lot to learn from senior designers."

E-mail the author at avergara@inuquirer.com.ph

CLOTHES: JING CHUA, PETER LIM AND JEROME ANG
HAIR AND MAKEUP: TWINKLE OF LEONY DIAZ'S SALON (4137225)
AND HANNAH OF BAMBBI FUENTES
MODELS: IVY VONG-QUAN, GAYLE ONG (CAL CARRIE'S)
AND QUIRINO VICE GOV DAX CUA
SHOT ON LOCATION AT THE LOTUS TAOIST TEMPLE
IN QUEZON CITY
SPECIAL THANKS TO JONAS GAFFUD OF MERCATOR MODELS

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Inexpensive way to be fashionable

RETRO PRINT. Tube top from Liberté, retro-print shoulder bag from Donna Lyssa and black-bead necklace from RDS

GOING with the trend this 2005 need not be expensive. You just have to know where to look.

Whether it's metallics, luxe fabrics, retro prints, vintage floral or modern ethnic, you are likely to find the fashionistas' must-haves this year at Robinsons Department Store (RDS) and at reasonable prices.

Vintage floral means feminine and prim and proper look like panels of chiffon on bodice fronts, satin bows and embroidered ribbons. RDS has a wide variety of tops with flower or fruit prints in salmon pink, canary yellow and other cheerful colors.

Metallic suggests gold, silver, bronze, pewter and copper. A metallic bag or pair of shoes will complement a Julia (RDS exclusive label) blouse in subtle tones and skirt with geometric patterns.

Retro revival includes black-beaded accessories, pearls in every pastel shade, geometric or paisley designs, and even pop art. There are also Zebra-inspired pinstriped top, faux fur and leather, among others. Those wanting to go ethnic can go for tie-dyed and natural fabrics like cotton tops. Lustrous luxe fabric is used in pearl silk tubes or bustier dresses.

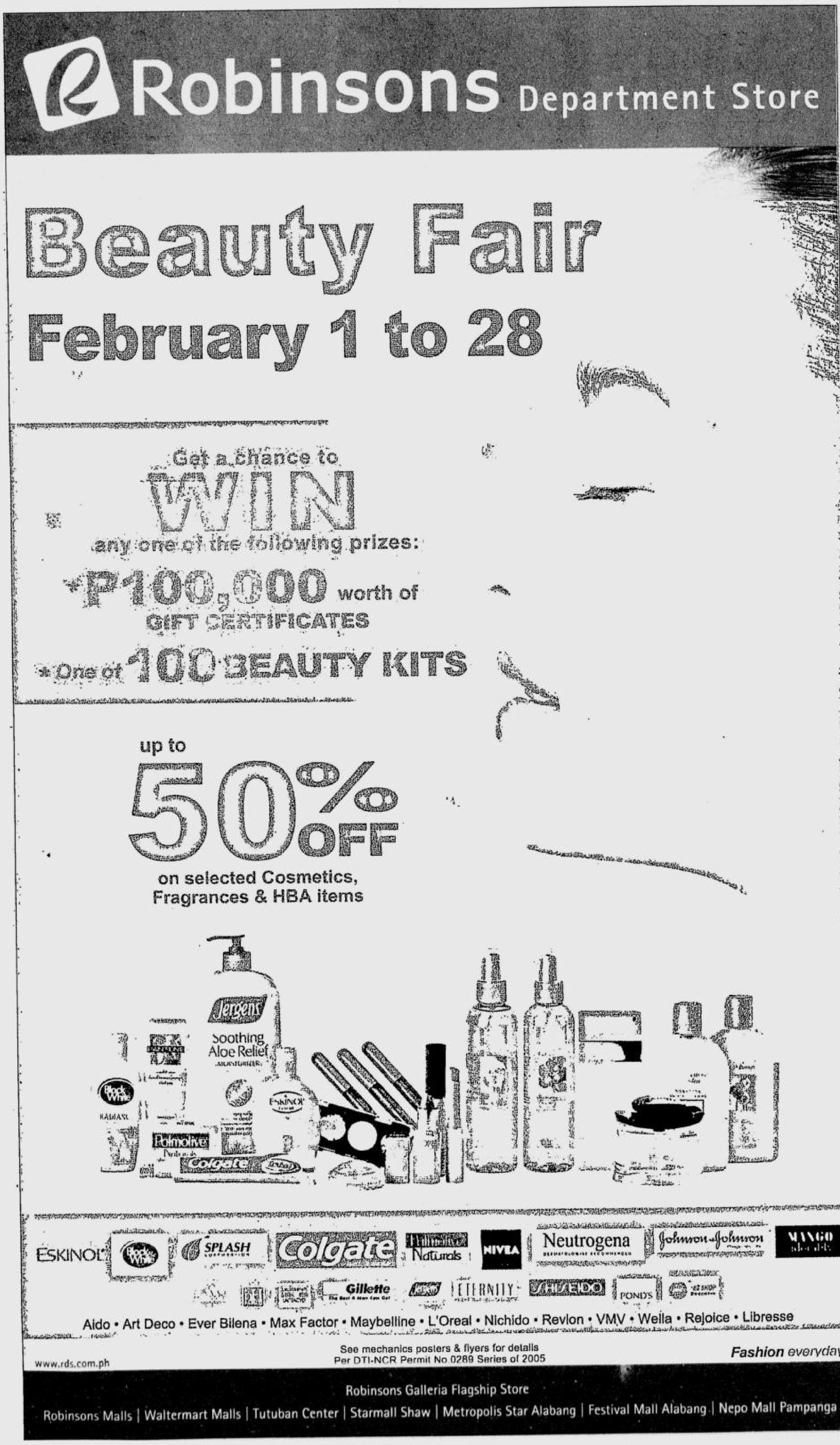
Visit Robinsons Department Stores in all Robinsons Malls, Waltermart Malls, Tutuban Center, Starmall-Shaw, Metropolis and Festival Malls-Alabang and Nepo Mall-Pampanga. Visit www.rds.com.ph.

COLORED METALLICS. Off-shoulder top and polka-dot skirt from Liberté, baby-blue metallic bag from Julia, hair accessory used as bracelet from RDS

VINTAGE FLORALS. Floral long-sleeve blouse, light-yellow sleeveless top and salmon-pink skirt; sleeveless floral top and green pants with belt. All from Liberté

LUXE FABRICS. Satin tube dress from Julia; georgette asymmetrical top from Julia and denim skirt from Liberté

MODERN ETHNIC. Striped tie-dyed blouse and denim shorts from Liberté, and white shoulder bag from Julia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LIFESTYLE *Beauty*

Prepping up for Valentine's Day

MAKEOVER 911

Kinny Salas

BEFORE WE think of what to give our significant other, I feel we should take care of ourselves first and foremost.

Remember, Valentine's Day falls on a Monday this year, and you will have to deal with traffic in the morning, a grueling workday, and even more traffic later when you try to get to the rendezvous with your loved one. You won't exactly look like your gorgeous best when you get there. This article is intended for both men and women. Teens need not read as God still does your makeup.

Due for Botox but haven't had the time to squeeze in for an appointment? There are two products designed for you.

Protox is a muscle-relaxant serum applied to expression lines on the forehead, between the brows, and on crow's feet to smooth out the creases. Protox 10 is designed for younger, less wrinkled skin with only fine lines, while Protox 20 is for people with deeper, more pronounced lines.

This is famous in the UK for extending the life of Botox or for those who are scared of needles. It contains hyaluronic acid and has a delivery system. Active ingredients are acetyl hexapeptide. E-mail jeunessemanila@yahoo.com or call 6888062.

Avon Anew Deep Crease Concentrate with Bio Hylurox—Tried and tested by my (older) relatives and they were very happy with it. To be applied twice a day on a cleansed face. It smoothes in and out. Target areas with most creases—forehead, between brows, around mouth and nose, where creases are prominent. It has a hygienic medicine dropper. This dual treatment system not only relaxes but also fills deep creases with clinical precision. Call Avon hotline at 8642900 or e-mail helpdesk.ph@avon.com.

Undereye or dark circles? Only **Your Vitamin K eye cream** shrinks the veins under the eyes and gets rid of dark circles. The Only Your brand is the only one approved by The American Institute of Aesthetics. Their face cream also deals with bruises and broken capillaries on the face. Also distributed by Jeunesse.

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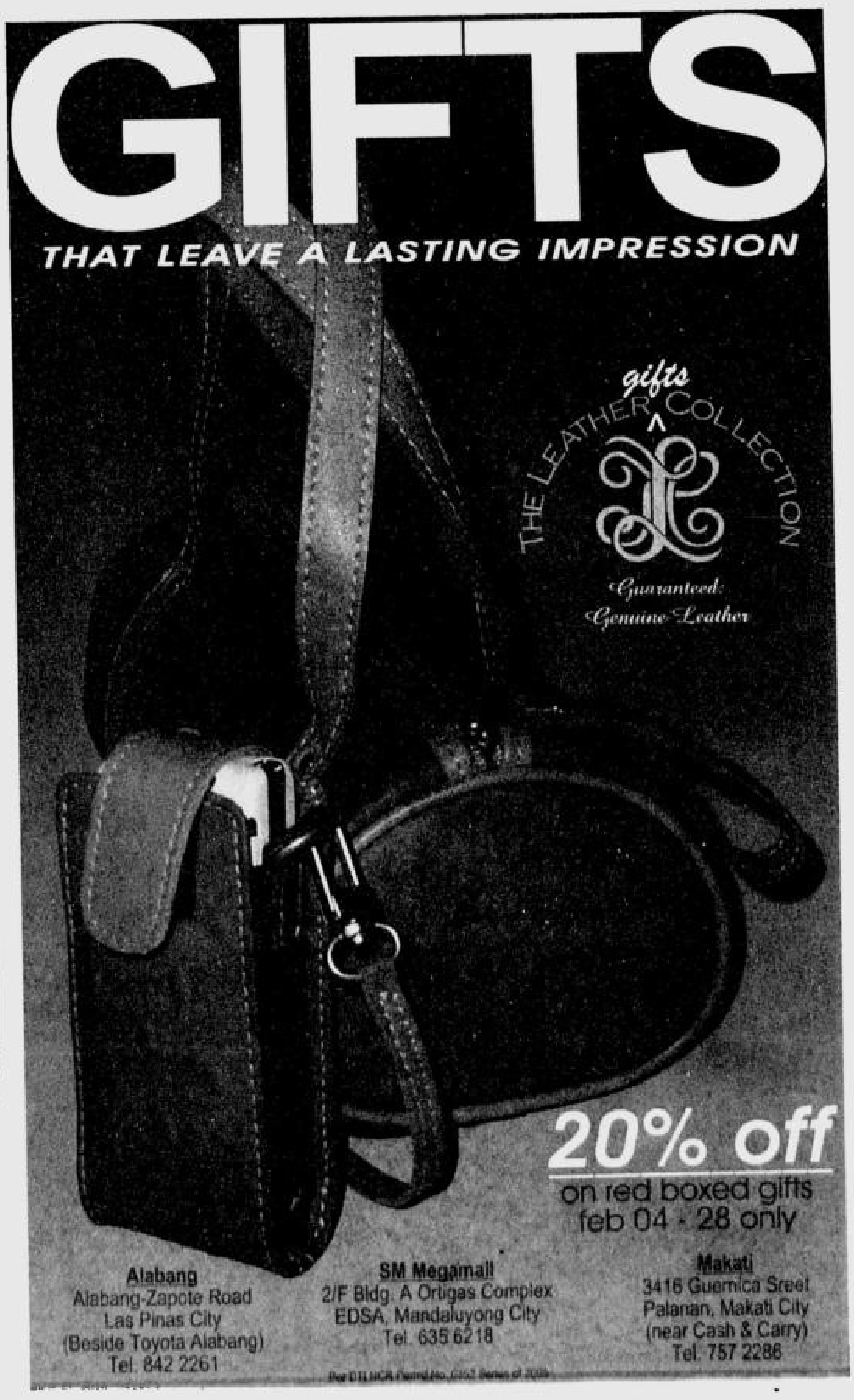

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Bags to riches

Villareal bags give shoe chicks a reason to turn into bag babes

Text by Pam Pastor
Photos by August Dela Cruz

MANY people believe that women are divided into two all-important groups—the bag babes and the shoe chicks.

Bag babes drool over packs of all kinds and allow their names to sit on waiting lists for the perfect designer tote. So what if they're buying their seventh red bag? "A girl can never have enough bags" is the mantra they live by.

Shoe chicks found a soulmate in "Sex and the City's" Carrie Bradshaw. Their collection cuts across budgets and brand names, with their racks lined with Janylins, Steve Maddens and Jimmy Choos. They endure the pain of walking in stilettos with a smile on their faces. "Grin and wear it"—that's every shoe chick's maxim.

But a delightful store in Eastwood's Fashion Village is giving shoe chicks good reason to cross over to the other side.

Villareal bags, designed by 29-year-old Voltaire Joseph Villareal, are a bag aficionado's dream.

Voltaire plays with a myriad of colors, fabrics and textures to bring gorgeous creations that would add zing to any woman's wardrobe.

"I love bright colors. I remember I was one of the first to use them, when the trend then was either black or gray. I have an inkling to use ordinary materials and incorporate designs like chopsticks, mahjong pieces, door knobs and zippers," he says.

His Orientalia collection from two years ago, where he utilized chopsticks and mahjong pieces, remains his favorite.

His designs are driven by many things. "I'm a very observant person. '*Tsismoso*' in our parlance. I observe what people are wearing, what 'colors they are using. I'm lucky to have a foresight or feel for what's going to be 'in.' My designs are also influenced by the raw materials available."

Not unusual

The path wasn't unusual for him because he grew up around bags. His parents started manufacturing bags in the mid-70s, supplying bags to big department stores including SM and Rustan's.

Voltaire decided to establish his brand after participating in a Greenhills bazaar in 1997. "I observed na *puro* rip-off bags *ang* available *sa* market so I made bags without logos."

Seven years, four stores and many collections later, Voltaire remains passionate about his craft and continues to make plans for the future.

"I'll save up for bigger stores in 2007. I'm focusing on designing high-end slippers in mid-range prices. I would also like to have a shop in Greenhills where I started. I'll gather the best bag brands in Manila along with my own."

Yes, he is not selfish with his success and has even become an advocate of sorts for Filipino design. "At Eastwood, I'm starting to add pieces from other designers, like Yulo shoes, Ciara Creates, Avatar Accessories. I would like to offer the best fashion accessories of the Philippines in my shop."

But right now, our spotlight is trained on his own designs—on the belt bags that have become his best-seller since late last year, and on the other beautiful pieces that line his store shelves.

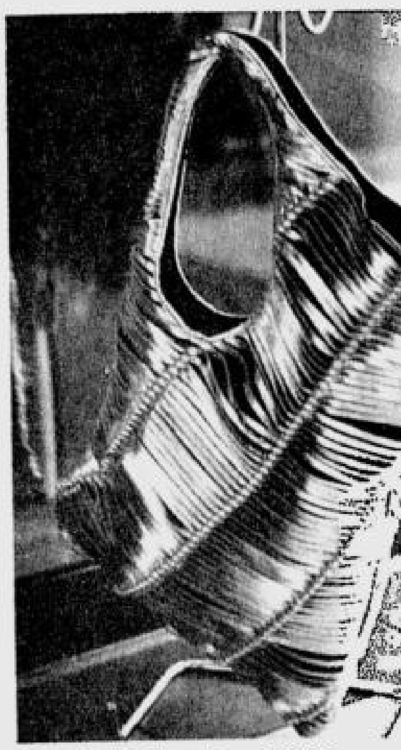
There are belt bags encrusted with crystals, corduroy carry-alls, retro-themed coco shell bags, clutches in all sizes and big bags that don't compromise style.

There's literally a bag for every mood and every occasion—embellished pouches for cocktails and formal parties, pretty clutches for special dates, messenger bags for busy school and workdays and glamorized travel bags for short trips.

Voltaire's designs are eye-catching, the quality admirable and the prices reasonable. Now that's a fashion trio even shoe loyalists will love.

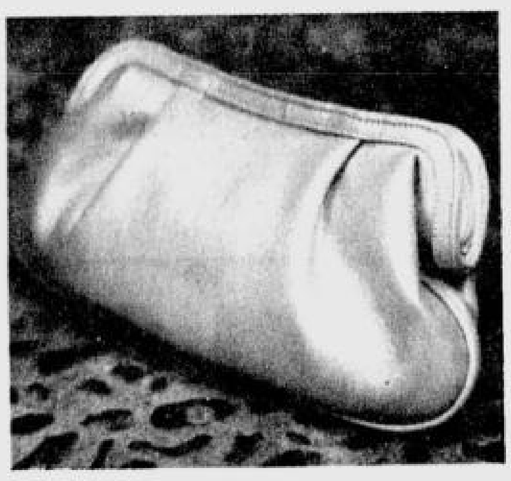
Villareal bags are available at Villareal in Eastwood, Libis (9958816), Market! Market!, Girl Shoppe at Robinson's Galleria and Rockwell Hip.

E-mail the author at ppastor@inquirer.com.ph.



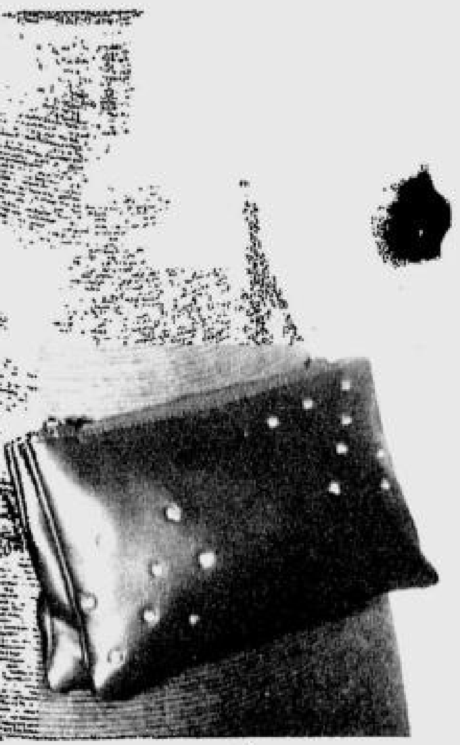
A DOSE of silver. Bag, P3,000

CRAZY about corduroy. Bag, P1,500

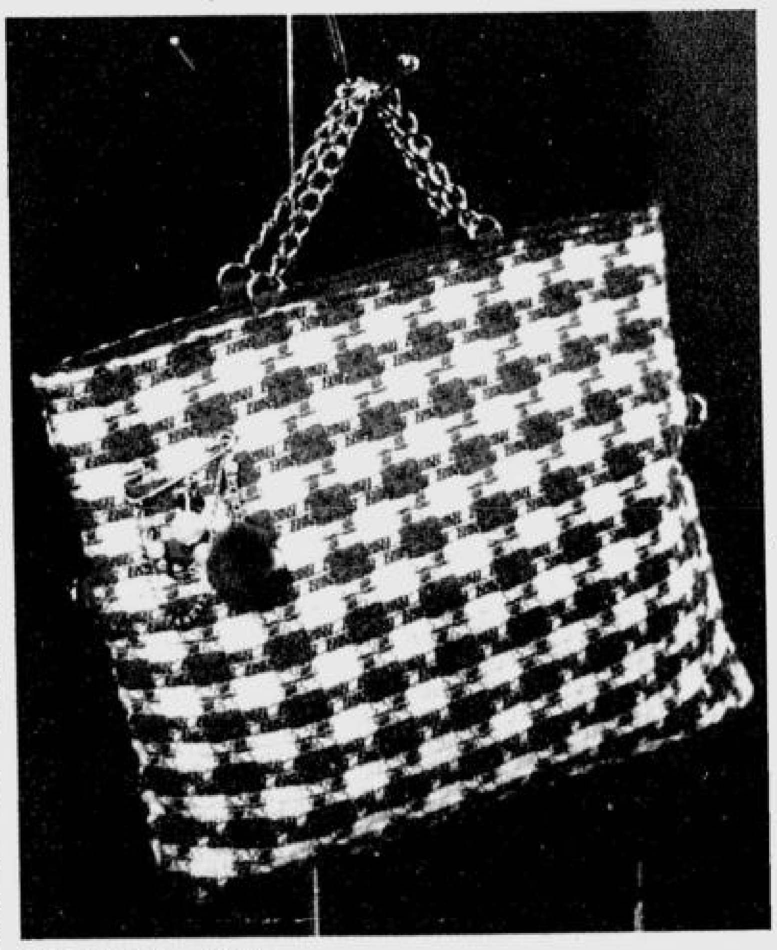


PEARLY pink. Clutch, P499

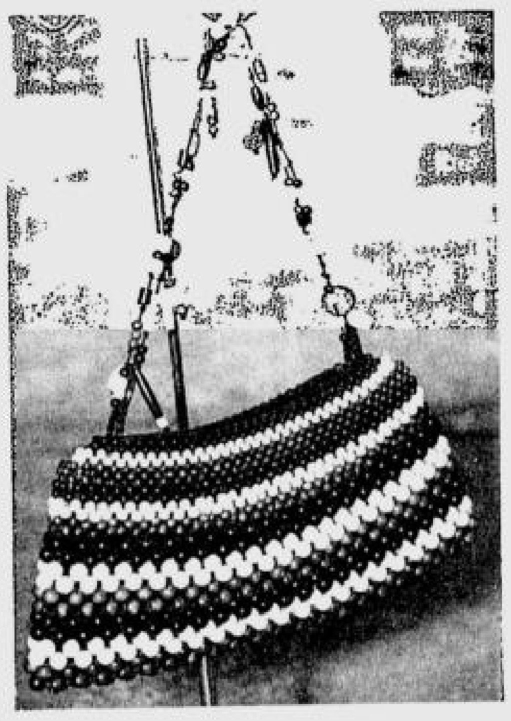
BONKERS over buttons. Blue bag, P850



CRYSTAL CRAVE. Belt bag, P850



CHECK-UP. Bag, P950



BEADED beauty. Bag, P1,500

Glamour at Tiffany's

A book presents the iconic American fashion era through the glittering prism of the jewelry great

TIFFANY IN FASHION
John Loring

A FASCINATING story of fashion, fame, photography and fabulous jewels comes vividly alive on the glossy pages of "Tiffany in Fashion: A Study of American Fashion and Fashion Photography (1933-2003)," by John Loring.

With a historian's eye for the architects of American fashion, and an insider's knowledge of the outsize personalities on both sides of the camera, Loring chronicles the story of fashion's move from Paris to New York, the rise of fashion photography, and Tiffany jewelry as fashion accessory.

The book recaps the 70-year history of America's role in fashion. The lavishly illustrated 272-page book features 250 images by the world's greatest fashion photographers, from Edward Steichen, Horst, and Hoyningen-Huene to Richard Avedon, Victor Skrebneski, Francesco Scavullo, Hiro and Herb Ritts.

Immortalized

In capturing the newness of American fashion, these masters of the medium showcased the striking originality of Tiffany jewelry and immortalized celebrity models, from Suzy Parker, Jean Shrimpton and Lauren Hutton to Brooke Shields, and film stars such as Sophia Loren and Elizabeth Taylor.

The images are accompanied by incisive essays by two legendary names in American fashion—publicist Eleanor Lambert and designer James Galanos—as well as anecdotal and informative text, with quotations from illustrious fashion editors Edna Woolman Chase, Carmel Snow and Diana Vreeland.

As Loring writes, the pace of fashion, of fashion photography and fashion jewels has evolved with dazzling speed over the last seven decades. He begins in 1933 with Edward Steichen, inventor of modern fashion photography, who created for Vogue the first photographs accessorized by Tiffany jewels—lavish natural pearls and emerald and diamond bracelets—with models in Paris haute couture. These were followed by photo essays on prominent socialites, and images in the manner of Hollywood glamour portraits, all styled with Tiffany jewelry.

Loring recounts the rise in the 1930s and 1940s of American designers, who modernized fashion along simpler lines, dictating a new kind of jewelry—"huge and affluent," in the words of Vogue editor Edna Woolman Chase. Tiffany's astounding array of jewels for the 1939-40 New York World's Fair was precisely that. The collection, which appeared in Steichen photographs for Vogue, included a tiara with a 75-carat emerald, and a showstopper necklace of 429 diamonds with a 217-carat aquamarine.

Throughout the 1950s, Tiffany jewels highlighted the work of Richard Avedon with his images of legendary model Dovima.

In 1956, the year Jean Schlumberger joined Tiffany, Town & Country featured a portrait of society beauty Winston ("CZ") Guest in Mainbocher and Schlumberger's chic, fanciful jewels. It was the first of countless fashion photographs with Schlumberger jewelry and the clothes of the world's foremost designers.

Schlumberger's clientele ranged from Jacqueline Kennedy, Barbara "Babe" Paley and Rachel "Bunny" Mellon to Hollywood royalty. His jewels adorned the designs of James Galanos, Arnold Scaasi, Bill Blass, Giorgio Armani and Emanuel Ungaro.

In 1960, Harper's Bazaar published a full-page portrait of Schlumberger jewels as fashion statements in themselves. With this image, by a young photographer named Hiro, a new genre of fashion photography was born.

Sculptural

As shown in the book, Hiro found his ideal subject in the sculptural, nature-inspired jewelry of Elsa Peretti, who joined Tiffany in 1974. The designer who most influenced 20th-century fashion, Elsa Peretti was also the favorite model of leading '70s designer Halston and the darling of photography greats Helmut Newton and Francesco Scavullo. Still the most frequently illustrated by the fashion press, her versatile jewelry is featured throughout the book in photographs of many beautiful women, including Iman and Candace Bergen.

The 1980s marked the return of color and opulence to fashion, giving rise to such spirited innovators as Christian Lacroix, and in jewelry, the generously scaled and colorful jewels of Paloma Picasso, who joined Tiffany in 1980. Exuberant and incontestably elegant, the Paloma Picasso look is stunningly interpreted in a Skrebneski photograph of model Cindy Crawford.

The book is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in fashion, fashion photography, society or jewelry. Readers also gain an understanding of the worldwide awareness and enjoyment of fashion that was made possible by the renowned image-makers Loring so skillfully captures.

"Tiffany in Fashion" is exclusively available at Tiffany & Co. in Rustan's Makati and Shangri-La Plaza. Limited copies only.

New coverage makeup

FASIO introduces Fasio Fit & Stay, a collection of powders and foundations that keep the skin matte and shine-free all day. This new line of coverage makeup contains super fine pore-smoothing powders that come in natural tones, especially made for Asian skin. Its waterproof formula is resistant to perspiration, water and sebum. The collection comes in liquid foundation and the refillable foundation powder.

For youthful and glowing skin

Estée Lauder presents Re-Nutriv Intensive Lifting Lotion designed to strengthen skin so it remains youthful and glowing.

The lotion keeps skin hydrated by locking in water in the cells using linoleic acid. Centella Asiatica and powerful anti-oxidants boost collagen products. Nanosphere technology allows easy absorption of this formula.

Estée Lauder is available at Rustan's.

What every woman needs

Dior pioneers a new approach to help keep the skin firm. With the Capture Sculpt 10, Dior addresses all women's concerns, whatever the shape of their faces. The Firming Pre-Treatment Lotion prepares skin for the treatments to follow.

Contouring Gel-Emulsion is for round faces that tend to become too fleshy, primarily around the chin and throat. This refining complex helps contour the lower part of the face. Re-Plumping Emulsion is for triangular faces with prominent cheekbones. This extra-volume complex helps plump up hollowed cheeks and thinned lips. Lifting Firming Creme or Fluid has a special effect on overall skin tone. Skin feels denser, better supported; the face appears "lifted."

Iza Calzado's choice of fragrance

TELEVISION personality Iza Calzado has been named Avon Fragrances new endorser.

She joins the roster of Avon's celebrity spokespersons that include international artist Lea Salonga and, more recently, Oscar-nominated Hollywood actress Salma Hayek.

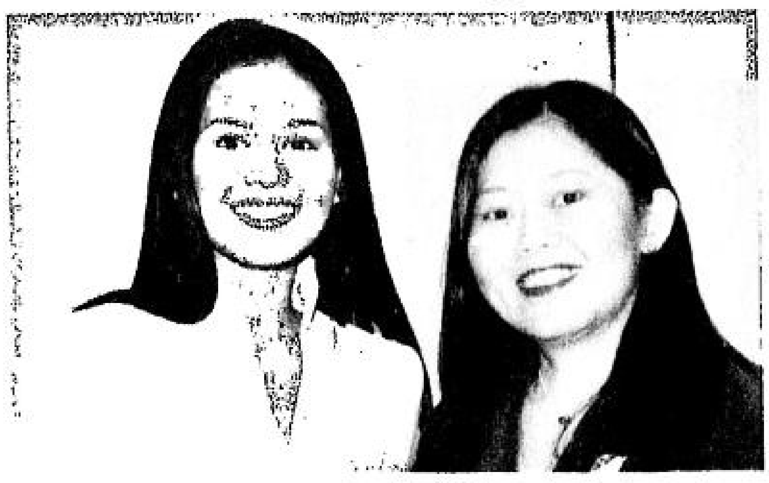
Charmane Abad, Avon Group marketing manager, says Calzado is the ideal representative of the company's core fragrances. The actress, according to Abad, has the characteristics of a true Avon Woman.

Calzado is multi-faceted and the variety of fragrances she endorses complements the different aspects of her personality. She has a wholesome personality and is unpretentious. Seemingly very approachable, Filipino women, specially the Avon Ladies, will not find it hard to connect with her, Abad says.

With her impeccable reputation and unassuming personality, Avon believes Calzado will strengthen the company's unique and personal relationship with Filipino women.

The actress endorses Avon's core fragrance line that includes Sweet Honesty, Imari Velvet, Imari Classic, Arianne and Far Away.

Avon products are available through Avon Ladies nationwide and at Avon Boutiques in SM Megamall, SM South Mall, SM Fairview and Glorietta.



AVON Fragrance spokesmodel Iza Calzado with Avon Cosmetics Inc. marketing director Kit Lian Ti

Deadline for hairstyling awards extended

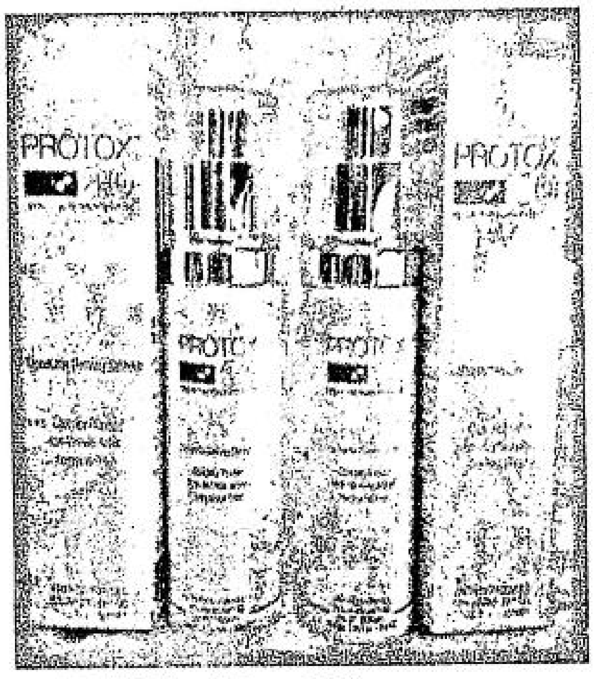
THE DEADLINE for submission of entries to the Philippine Hairdressing Awards (PHA), an annual hairdressing competition by Schwarzkopf Professional, is extended until Feb. 11.

Those interested can get copies of qualifying rules and entry forms at Top Style Marketing Inc., exclusive Philippine licensee of Schwarzkopf Professional products, at 25PA Eisenhower Condominium, Eisenhower St., Greenhills, San Juan, tel. 7268507-08, 7231763 and 7228474; and e-mail topstyle@pldtdsl.net.

The contest is open to hairdressers who have worked in a commercial establishment for at least three years. Foreign hairdressers can join if they have worked in the Philippines for the last two years and have work permits.

Entries should include duly accomplished entry forms and four photographs of their creations during the past 12 months. Top winner will be named the Philippine Hairdresser of the Year. Winners will also be chosen in Commercial, Avant Garde, Men's, Newcomer of the Year and Team of the Year categories.

Winners in all five categories will compete in the Asia Hairdressing Award to be held in Taiwan in October. Recipient of the Asia Hairdresser of the Year award will be Schwarzkopf Professional's special guest during the forthcoming British Hairdressing Awards ceremony in London.



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Prepping up for Valentine's Day

From page E1

ment or constricted veins under the skin. The Vitamin K nanosomes are very small they easily penetrate the pores; they have also found a way to stabilize retinol (lightens deep pigmentation) and don't dissolve into the atmosphere. Available at any Belo medical clinic branch. Call 8442939.

Eyebags? I am faithful to my de-puffing firming eye creams such as **Shu Uemura's Beta G**, **Sundari Neem** eye cream and **L'Oreal Hydrafresh** eye gel cream. For those who need a quicker fix, **Preparation H** hemorrhoid cream (available at drugstores) applied on the eye bags will shrink them fast. Do not get the formula into your eyes!

Pimples? Dry them up overnight with **Mario Badescu** pimple lotion or apply on them cotton-saturated **L'Occitane Lavender Vinegar** taped to your face overnight.

For women: visible pigmentation marks?

At this point what you'll need is a great concealer. My favorites are **Laura Mercier's Secret Camouflage** (P1,650) has two shades in the palette that you can blend on the back of your hand to get your perfect shade. The catch is you will need the LM Secret Camouflage brush, but it is well worth it. If what you have are pimple marks, **Shu Uemura's Pro Spots** concealer in the right shade can be applied in a rush.

Announcements: Louis Philippe Kee is no longer with Emphasis but will transfer to You Hair and Body Salon at The Fort.

Health Express now has a website containing a list of branches nearest you nationwide. It helps you choose what's best for your needs from their wide selection of supplements. Visit www.healthexpressph.com.

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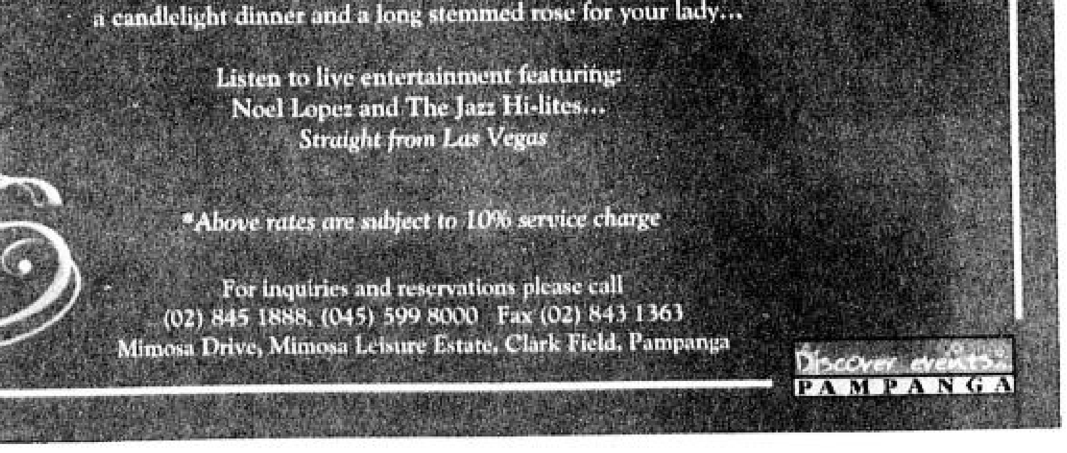

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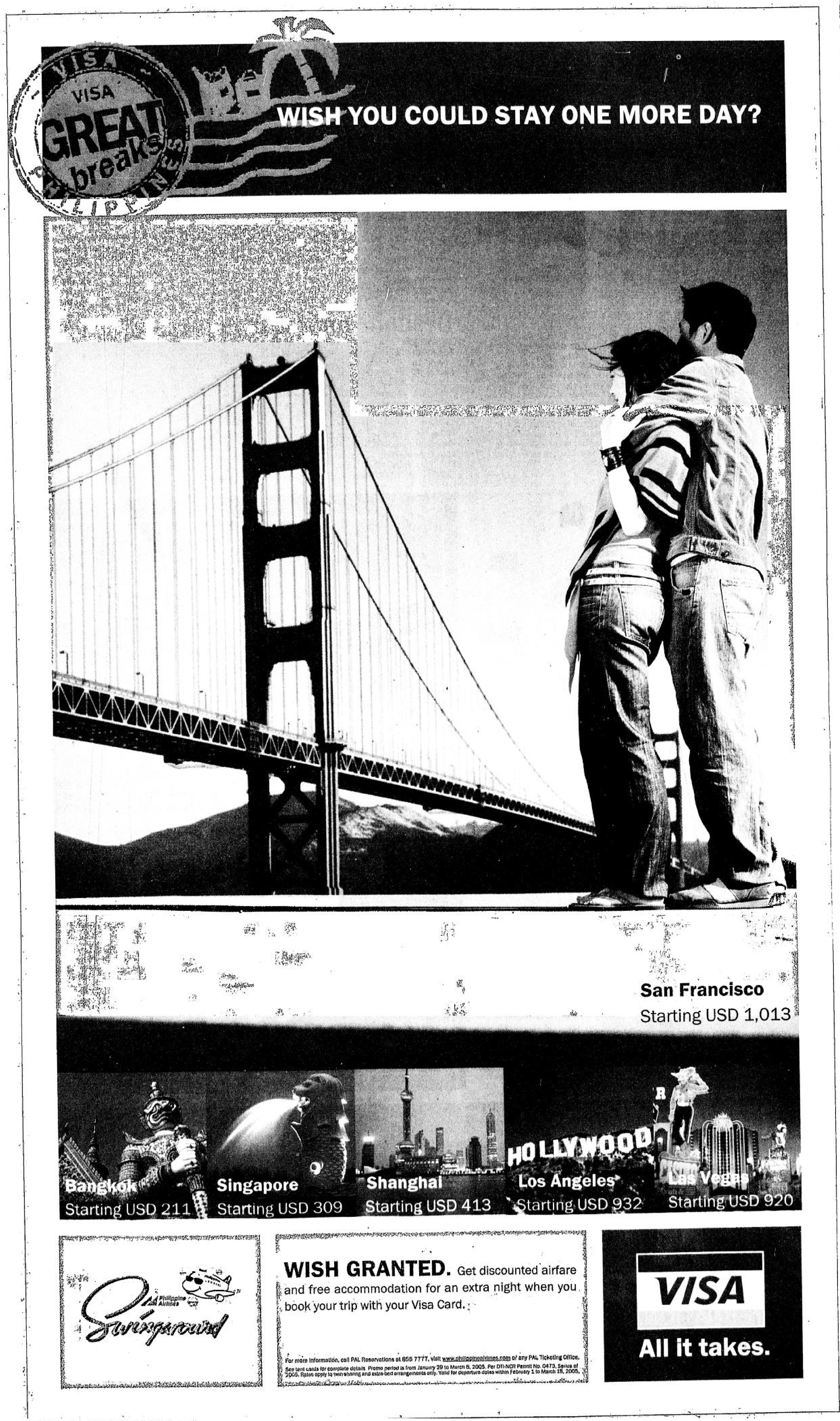

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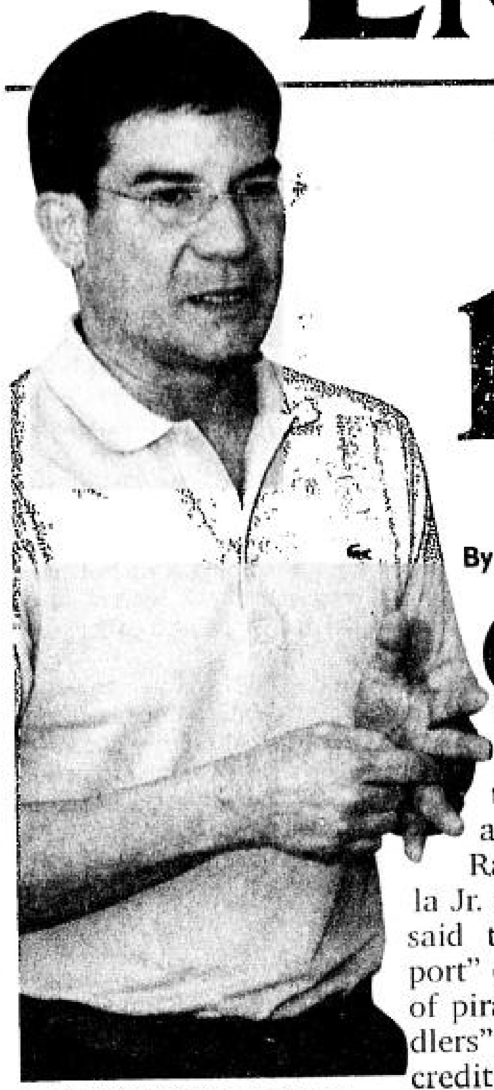
ROBERT YOUILL of the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, OMB's ally in Europe.

Edu: My OMB performance never an issue



MANZANO: It's those pirates.

By Marinel R. Cruz

OPTICAL Media Board Chair Edu Manzano denied early this week that he was in disagreement with Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. over his work, and said the "erroneous report" could be "the work of pirates and their coddlers" who mean to discredit him.

"We're trying to figure out where that came from," Manzano told INQUIRER Entertainment on Tuesday. "I, for one, have not said anything. Mr. Revilla himself acknowledged that the VRB (Videogram Regulatory Board) is different from the OMB."

Manzano, former vice mayor of Makati City and former president of the Actors Guild of the Philippines, replaced Revilla as VRB chair in January 2004. The OMB was created shortly after.

"We know for a fact that there was supposed to have been a concerted media campaign against the OMB," Manzano said. "[The pirates] threatened to wage war against us through the media—maybe some kind of disinformation campaign—when we tried to close down their facilities. We don't know [for sure] if this is connected."

Reports in the tabloids last week quoted the senator as saying he would appoint actor Rudy Fernandez as OMB chief because Manzano had not been effective in the post.

No discussion

But Manzano said he spoke with Revilla during the recent Senate hearing on the OMB's implementing rules and regulations (IRR). The issue never even came up, Manzano stressed.

Before the IRR was approved,

EDU/2

'POLITICAL MOTIVE'

Richard, Lucy to sue rumormongers

By Nini Valera

RICHARD GOMEZ will file charges against those who spread the rumor that his wife Lucy Torres had been caught several times shoplifting in Rustan's Department Store in Makati.

The actor told INQUIRER Entertainment last Wednesday that their lawyers advised them to file charges.

"We're trying to collate evidence and materials for a case," said Richard. "The case would most likely be for libel. Our lawyer has recommended we file a case against the people behind the e-mail, newspaper reports and TV shows (that have circulated and published the rumors)."

The rumor about Lucy's supposed shoplifting sprees started as a blind item in another newspaper in late 2003, in the politics section and not the lifestyle or entertainment page, he said.

"I can only think that the rumor was started by my political opponents," said Richard.

He said he called the newspaper's editor in chief to ask her who wrote the blind item. "She told me she didn't know," said Richard. "But I told her it was impossible that she didn't know who wrote it and where it came from since she was the editor of the paper."

A statement from Rustan's aired on "S-Files" said that there had been no incident of Lucy being caught shoplifting in the store and that there was no surveillance tape that showed her shoplifting.

GOMEZ: It's politics

Kris, Mikee, too

Richard said that when the rumor first appeared as blind items, Lucy talked about it with Kris Aquino.

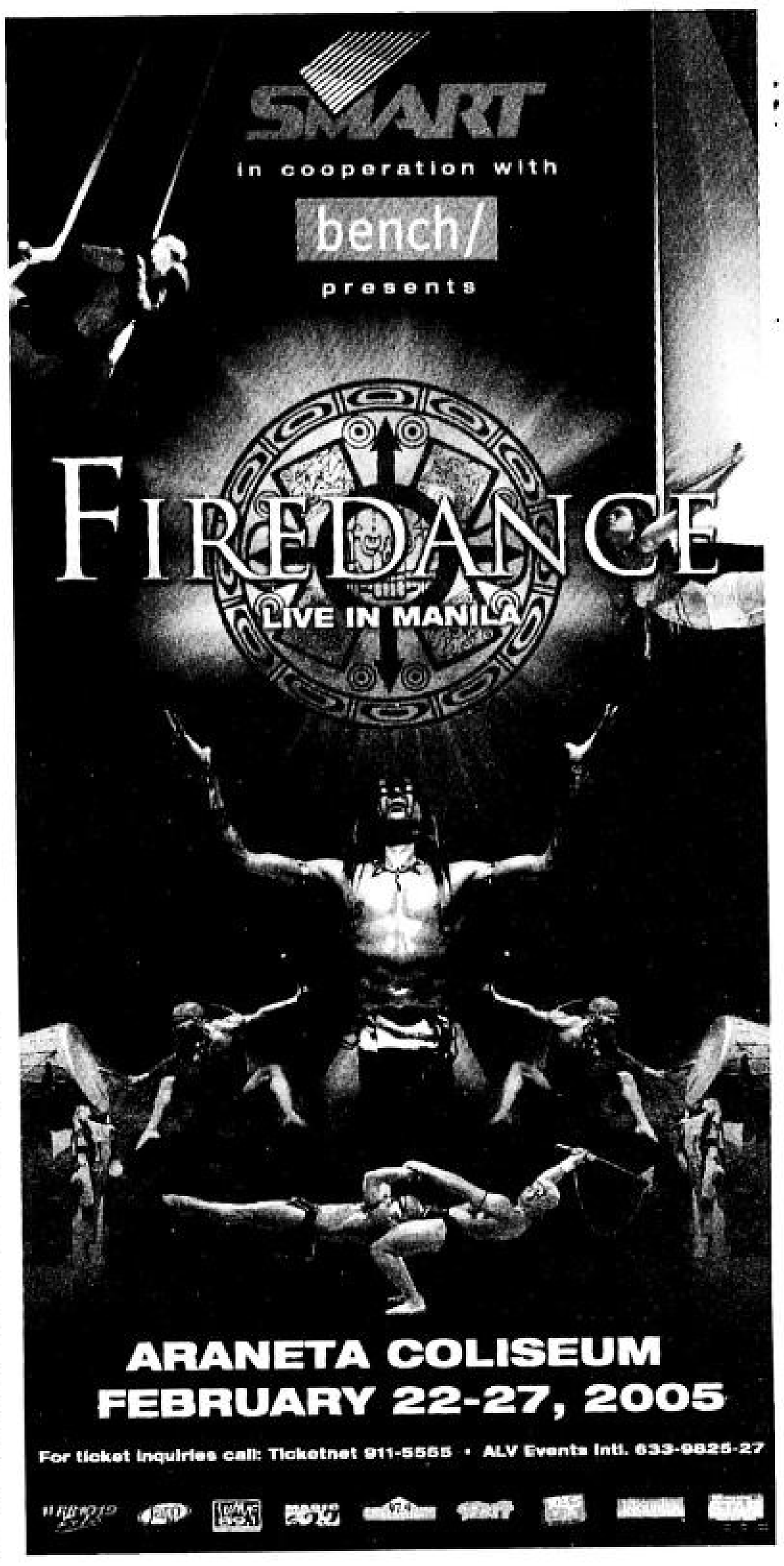
"Lucy told me that in their talk, they agreed that only three people fit the description (of the shoplifter in the blind items)," Richard recalled. "That was Lucy, Kris and Mikee (Cojuangco-Jaworski)."

More blind items of the same nature continued to appear in other newspapers and tabloids, he said.

"That was at the start of the FPJ campaign," Richard recounted. "At that time, the opposition was trying to draft me as a senatorial candidate in FPJ's ticket. Since there was [no dirt] on me and my wife, I guess they had to manufacture something. In one day, after a press release that the opposition was drafting me to run for senator, a series of shoplifting stories appeared all over the papers."

The latest blind item to appear in a tabloid

RICHARD/3



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Edu: My OMB performance never an issue

From page 1

the OMB operated under the old mandate of the VRB.

In October, the Justice department affirmed a Malacañang ruling that stopped Manzano, having been appointed OMB chief, from further appearing on his television program. He is in the cast of ABS-CBN's sitcom, "Okey, Fine, Whatever." He also used to host the noontime show "MTB: Ang Saya Saya."

On Tuesday, he spoke his mind: "My show biz career has nothing to do with [my function in the] OMB. Besides, I work on the shows after office hours."

Further, Manzano said, his OMB team works round the clock. "We conduct surveillance operations, we do plant inspections as early as 3 or 4 in the morning. This is to make sure people [engaged in the replication of DVDs and VCDs] are not doing anything illegal on the side."

Manzano said OMB agents collected 635,000 pirate discs during a raid in Quiapo, Manila, last December. All in four hours, he pointed out. "I was shocked at the extent and magnitude of piracy. We hate to see the problem grow. Now, members of our raiding team conduct independent operations. We have 66 multi-tasking personnel. We didn't hire new staff members."

London connection

Tuesday's lunch was called for the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the OMB and the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI). Manzano's co-signee from the IFPI was Southeast Asia regional anti-piracy enforcement coordinator Robert Youill.

The MOA states that IFPI is allowing OMB full access to its forensic examination facility in London.

Manzano explained: "[The IFPI] has oriented us on the facility's operations. It's basically getting the discs, putting them in evidence bags, writing the proper markings, then shipping them straight to London."

The MOA, he said, was an indication that the OMB's efforts are not being ignored. "It's nice... I want to say it's not just for me, but [for] the entire office. We are sorely lacking in resources; just the same, we are making progress, creating such an impact that the international community is noticing."

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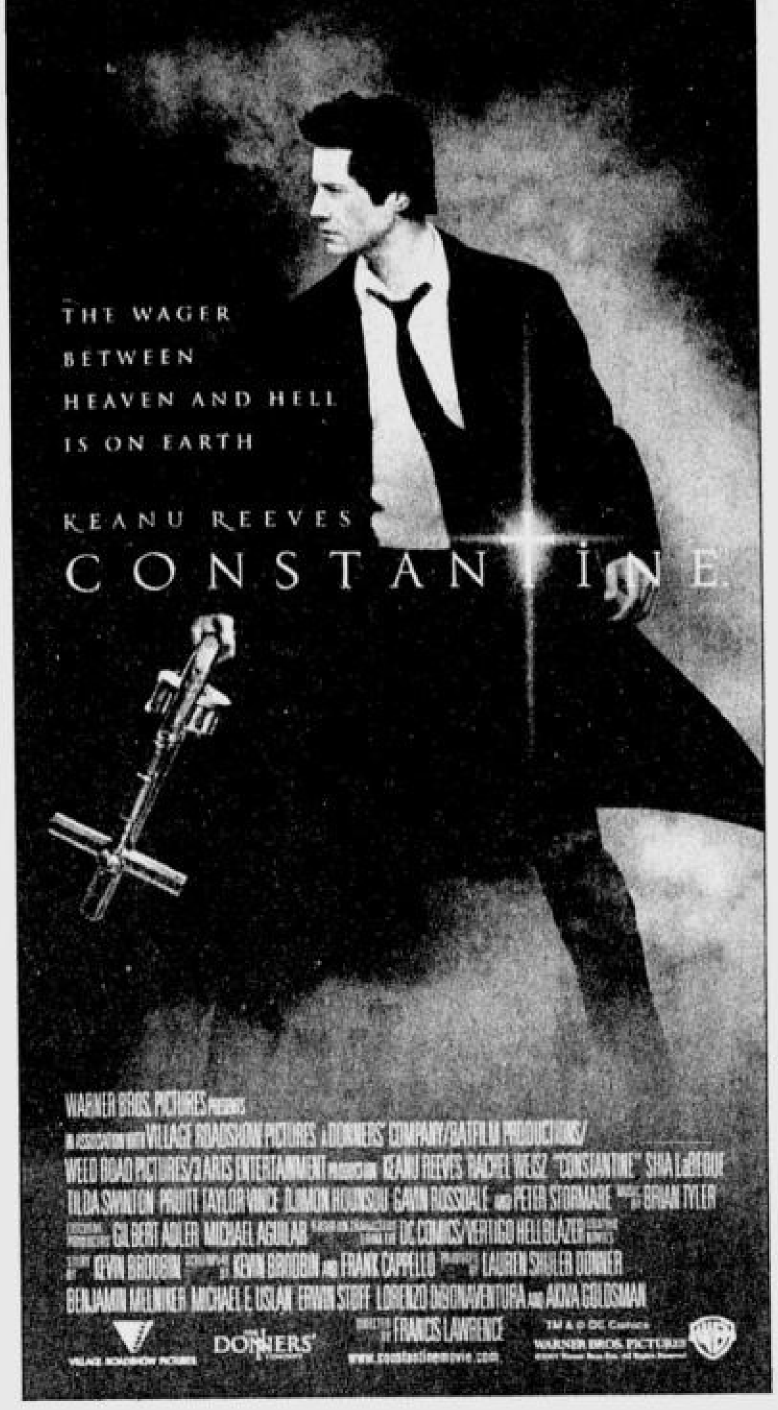

'Get a Life,' fly to NYC

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The grand prize consist of two passes to watch MTV's "Total Request Live" in New York City.

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8 OCEAN'S TWELVE
9 MEET THE FOCKERS
10 ELEKTRA
11 BLADE TRINITY
12 WHITE NOISE

sm city fairview
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5 MEET THE FOCKERS
6 ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13
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9 A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
10 MAD HOUSE
11 BLADE TRINITY
12 IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE

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2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
4 SHALL WE DANCE
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6 ELEKTRA
7 WITHOUT A PADDLE
8 BLADE TRINITY
9 MEET THE FOCKERS
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2 SHALL WE DANCE
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4 MEET THE FOCKERS
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6 RACING STRIPES
7 IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE
8 BLADE TRINITY
9 KUNG FU HUSTLE
10 WHITE NOISE

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6 GOLD (SDDS) SHALL WE DANCE
7 GOLD (DOLBY) A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
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Luke Mejares live at Megamall Atrium

LUKE Mejares will heat up your afternoon when he performs live at the Atrium of SM Megamall, Building A, today starting at 2 p.m.

Luke will sing cuts from his debut album, "Stop ... Luke ... and Listen," such as "Paano Na," "Livin' Without You," "214" and the new single "Ulan."

The album, now released in special audio-VCD format, includes two new songs, a remake of the Rivermaya hit, "214" and El Debarge's "Who's Holding Donna Now," plus music videos of his first two hits, "Paano Na" and "Livin' Without You."

SHOW TIME

Get up close and personal with Luke after the show when he signs autographs for those who will buy his album "Stop ... Luke ... and Listen" at Odyssey SM Megamall.

"Luke Mejares Live at SM Megamall" is presented by Monster Radio RX 93.1.

The special edition of "Stop ... Luke ... and Listen" is now available in CDs and cassettes from BMG Records Pilipinas.

Richard, Lucy to sue rumormongers

From page 1

about the shoplifting rumor that INQUIRER Entertainment had seen was two weeks ago. It said the wife of a handsome actor-politician was caught in a department store filching a branded wallet and bottle of perfume. It said the actor-politician had made arrangements with the department store to pay for whatever items his wife had stolen from the store.

A reenactment of the rumored shoplifting incident was also aired on "Ek Channel," on ABS-CBN.

'I'm not guilty'

In her column in another newspaper last Sunday and in an interview with "S-Files" also last Sunday, Lucy confronted the rumor and even published e-mails that identified her as the shoplifter. She told INQUIRER Entertainment that text messages identifying her as having been caught shoplifting in Rustan's have also begun to circulate.

"Since they put my name already, I decided to react," Lucy said. "I did not react when it was only blind items. I just decided to keep quiet about it. I thought it would go away. Besides, I'm not guilty (of shoplifting)."

ABS-CBN newscasters Ces Drilon and Karen Davila were also dragged into the issue. In her column and in her "S-Files" interview, Lucy said Richard had called Karen to ask her if she had a surveillance tape that showed Lucy shoplifting in Rustan's.

Karen has denied possessing such a tape.

Lucy told INQUIRER Entertainment that she was referring to Ces Drilon in her column as the ABS-CBN news anchor who asked San Juan Mayor JV. Ejercito if he knew that Lucy was a klepto.

Ces has denied repeating the rumor as fact.

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R-13

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10:40 1:05, 3:35
6:05, 8:35, 11:00
PG-13

3 ELEKTRA
10:40, 1:05, 3:35
6:05, 8:35, 11:00
PG-13

4 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
10:50, 1:15, 3:45
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1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00
A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
1:20 4:00 6:40 9:20
WITHOUT A PADDLE
12:00 2:15 4:30 6:45 9:00
ELEKTRA
1:50 4:20 6:50 9:20
MEET THE FOCKERS
12:00 2:15 4:30 6:45 9:00

ALI MALL CINEMAS
1 Dolby ELEKTRA
12:55 3:25 5:55 8:25
2 SDDS ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
12:55 3:25 5:55 8:25
3 dts SHALL WE DANCE
12:30 3:10 5:50 8:30
4 Dolby A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
12:10 2:50 5:30 8:10
5 Dolby RACING STRIPES
12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00

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Feb. 4 Game 3
Feb. 6 Game 4
Feb. 9 Game 5 If necessary
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RACING STRIPES
GP
12:40,3:00,5:20,7:40,10:00

A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
R13
11:45,2:20,4:55,7:30,10:055

MEET THE FOCKERS
PG13
12:15,2:45,5:15,7:45,10:15

ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13
R13
12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:10

ELEKTRA
PG13
12:45,2:55,5:05,7:15,9:25

SHALL WE DANCE?
GP
12:45,2:55,5:05,7:15,9:25

SHALL WE DANCE?
11:30, 2:10, 4:50, 7:30, 10:10
GP

A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
12:10, 3:00, 5:50, 8:40
R13

FEBRUARY 4, 2005 VIVA HOT BABES 9:00 PM
FEBRUARY 5, 2005 LAUGH AT THE MUSEUM 8:00 PM

SHANG CINEPLEX
① SHALL WE DANCE
FS 12:00PM, 2:30PM, 5:00PM, 7:30PM, LMF 10:00PM (GP)
② RACING STRIPES
FS 12:00PM, 2:15PM, 4:30PM, 6:45PM, LMF 9:00PM (GP)
③ ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
FS 12:10PM, 2:40PM, 5:10PM, 7:40PM, LMF 10:10PM (R-13)
④ A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
FS 10:40AM, 1:30PM, 4:20PM, 7:10PM, LMF 10:00PM (R-13)
PREMIERE THEATRE ELEKTRA
FS 12:00PM, 2:30PM, 5:00PM, 7:30PM, LMF 10:00PM (PG-13)
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• METRO MANILA CINEMAS •

GALLERIA 632-9115/16
1 A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT • THX
10:40 1:30 4:20 7:00 10:00
2 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
3 RACING STRIPES
10:50 1:05 3:20 5:35 7:50 10:00
4 WITHOUT A PADDLE
10:50 1:05 3:20 5:35 7:50 10:00
5 ELEKTRA
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
6 SHALL WE DANCE
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
7 BLADE TRINITY
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
8 BATH HOUSE
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
9 MEET THE FOCKERS
10:50 1:05 3:20 5:35 7:50 10:00
10 WHITE NOISE
12:20 2:40 5:00 7:20 9:40

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12
1 SHALL WE DANCE
10:35 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50
2 RACING STRIPES
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
3 ELEKTRA
10:35 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50
4 RESERVE
5 MEET THE FOCKERS
10:20 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
6 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
10:35 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50
7 A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
10:30 1:20 4:10 7:00 9:50

METRO EAST 682-8193/99 • 682-8280
1 IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE
11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00
2 ELEKTRA
11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:00
3 KUNG FU HUSTLE
10:50 12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00
4 MEET THE FOCKERS
11:20 1:40 4:00 6:30 9:00
5 SHALL WE DANCE
12:30 3:00 5:30 8:00 10:30
6 A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
10:30 1:00 3:30 6:00 8:20 10:30
7 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
12:30 3:00 5:30 8:00 10:30
8 RACING STRIPES
10:50 1:10 3:30 5:50 8:10 10:30

NOVALICHES 935-3229/31
1 ELEKTRA
10:40 1:05 3:30 5:55 8:25
2 RACING STRIPES
11:40 1:55 4:05 6:15 8:25
3 A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
10:30 1:00 3:30 6:00 8:30
4 BLADE TRINITY
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 8:50
5 IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE
11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 8:55
6 SHALL WE DANCE
11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 8:55
7 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
10:40 1:05 3:30 5:55 8:25
8 OCEAN'S TWELVE
11:50 2:40 5:30 8:25

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PIONEER 687-5378
1 SHALL WE DANCE
11:30 1:50 4:10 6:30 8:50
2 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
11:30 1:50 4:10 6:30 8:50
3 RACING STRIPES
11:30 1:50 4:10 6:30 8:50
4 A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
10:25 1:00 3:35 6:10 8:45

Citisquare MALABON 288-0985 / 2575
1 UNO
11:30 1:45 4:00 6:15 8:30
2 RESIDENT EVIL
11:30 1:45 4:00 6:15 8:30
3 NED KELLY
11:30 1:45 4:00 6:15 8:30
4 SYLVIA
11:30 1:45 4:00 6:15 8:30

CAINTA 240-4061
1 ELEKTRA
11:40 1:50 4:00 6:10 8:20
2 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
10:55 1:25 3:55 6:25 8:55
3 RACING STRIPES
11:40 2:00 4:20 6:40 9:00
4 SHALL WE DANCE
10:55 1:25 3:55 6:25 8:55

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'ELEKTRA'

Just another giggly girl who makes goo-goo eyes

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

REVIEW

ELEKTRA" is a spinoff from "Daredevil," another Marvel Comics action movie, released last year and starring Ben Affleck. This brings an integral supporting character, the masked vigilante's angry ex-lover, to the fore.

Elektra Natchios, still played by "Alias" star Jennifer Garner, returns—expectedly—after her violent demise in that prior movie.

Her resurrection is brought about by a mysterious group of benevolent warriors engaged in an age-old secret war with an organization of evil ninjas called the Hand.

In typical epic fashion, she finds herself an important figure in the ongoing feud.

But the wily and fiercely independent Elektra tips the scales, bringing her into a dark path that she soon embraces. As an assassin, she effortlessly dispenses death and chaos. Truly, she is an efficient killing machine feared by those who have personally seen her handiwork.

Life, or what passes for it, goes on for the young woman, until she is offered a new assignment that doesn't quite ring right. She is hired to kill a seemingly decent man, Mark (Goran Visnjic) and his 13-year-old daughter Abby (Kirsten Prout). She hesitates, and ultimately refuses to do the job, which naturally lands her, along with some new civilian friends, on the Hand's hit list.

Left with very few viable options, Elektra approaches her old estranged teacher, the blind martial arts guru Stick (Terence Stamp), for help.

She believes that Stick and his cadre of white ninjas may be able to hide and protect Mark and Abby, while she confronts her personal demons and faces a turning point that may just end the ancient war.

Fair warning

If you loathed "Daredevil," be warned. You'll loathe this one even more, but for different reasons.

While "Daredevil" pretty much painted a rushed picture of the very complex comic book characters, "Elektra" simply doesn't grab the viewer in ways that matter. The characters here, both old and new, aren't exactly interesting or intriguing.

"Elektra" was directed by Rob Bowman, known for decent science fiction-action flicks such as "X-Files: Fight the Future" and "Reign of Fire."

"Elektra's" first few minutes show promise. We see Elektra unleashed as the assassin she should've been in "Daredevil"—ruthless, centered, clad in her symbolic red outfit.

But even this introduction isn't enough. We want to see how deeply she has fallen from grace, how much she has transformed from chafed orphan girl to cold-blooded mercenary.

Instead, we are treated to character development that's predictable at best. Bad girl meets annoying sidekick and her dad, which reminds her of the past and her lost humanity, and makes her decide to be a good girl again.

Given the right treatment, it isn't such a bad formula, but this one just ended up being tiring and repetitive.

Elektra, despite the fact that she can mop the floor with the toughest opponents if it comes to that, is presented here as just another giggly girl who makes goo-goo eyes at a prospective love interest, and who becomes a mess whenever her feelings get hurt.

Forget that she's got a long comic book history as well. Staying true to the core of the original source is strictly hit or miss, anyway, depending on the film crew.

She should be a bastion of focus, regardless, not a stereotypical soap opera device with breasts. It's not believable, even on a plane ruled by suspension of disbelief. It makes her someone we can relate to, yes, but we could've related to her even if she's a hard-core killer, given a more creative treatment.

Forced plot

Plot-wise, we've seen the epic battle between good and evil ad nauseam, another layer of which is explored with Elektra's inner struggles. But is she remorseful for past sins? No.

How does she try to rectify her track record of murders? She doesn't—she merely experiences an epiphany that conveniently presents itself through the girl, Abby, who reminds her more and more of herself in supposedly creepy flashbacks and ominous exposition.

Speaking of Abby, we're presented with an odd subplot that this youngster is a "Treasure," or an innate warrior with future importance.

The word "Treasure" could be substituted with "Potential Vampire Slayer."

It just feels so forced and unoriginal, and we're led to believe that the people who killed Abby's mother are the same ones who killed Elektra's years ago as part of an unexplained master plan.

But if you're just into eye candy, "Elektra" might work. Sexy Jennifer Garner can definitely do stunts and can act; we've known that since "Alias."

"Elektra's" got fun action scenes, a sensual but deadly kiss between underused character Typhoid Mary (Natassia Malthe) and Elektra, and cheesy but tolerable dialogue.

Just don't expect anything substantial or riveting, because the movie lacks both a point and an edge.

SEXY Jennifer Garner can definitely do stunts and act, just don't expect anything substantial from the movie.

'The Grudge' is going back home

TOKYO—After grossing more than $143 million worldwide, Hollywood horror movie "The Grudge," a remake of a popular Japanese film, will return to its homeland next week for nationwide release.

Directed by Takashi Shimizu, 32, the film starring Sarah Michelle Gellar took top post in the United States for two straight weeks after its opening in October, according to distributors.

"At first, I was not sure whether American people would understand fluid, ambiguous and vague Japanese horror because American horror is simple and dry," Shimizu told a news conference in Tokyo.

"But I was very excited that the American audience liked this film. The figures proved that the film was well accepted," he said, adding "Spiderman" director Sam Raimi also joined the film as a producer.

"Sam Raimi asked me to bring the Japanese taste of horror to Hollywood," Shimizu said Tuesday.

Gellar played Karen, an American student studying welfare work at a university in Tokyo where she encounters a haunted house and horror unleashed by a female ghost and her deathly white young son.

After showing in 20 countries in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Russia, the Hollywood take on "The Grudge" will at last return to Japan next Friday.

The original Japanese version of "The Grudge" ("Ju-On"), which had largely the same plot, grossed 500 million yen ($4.7 million) and drew 400,000 moviegoers when released in 2002. The sequel the following year racked up 1.1 billion yen and more than one million viewers.

Takashige Ichise, one of the three producers for the film, said he was ecstatic about the remade film's surprising success in the United States.

"I and Mr. Shimizu were talking about making a film that would really scare away Americans. If Americans decided not to go to Japan after watching this film, it would mean a big success for us. We are the dispatchers of Japanese horror," Ichise said.

Of the $143 million in box-office profits, the film racked up $110 million dollars in the United States alone where it was shown at more than 3,200 US theaters. Apart from the United States, "The Grudge" ranked top in Britain, Brazil, Norway and the United Arab Emirates. *AFP*

BRANDO. Like George Raft

The reluctant Vito Corleone

LOS ANGELES—Marlon Brando repeatedly rejected playing the role of Don Corleone in "The Godfather," telling an assistant, "It's about the Mafia. I won't glorify the Mafia," according to an article in the new issue of Vanity Fair.

In the magazine's annual Hollywood issue, novelist and Brando's longtime friend Budd Schulberg said the actor's assistant, Alice Marchak, begged him to read the book. Schulberg, who wrote the screenplay for "On the Waterfront," one of Brando's most famous films, said at one point, the actor threw the book at her, saying, "For the last time," he said, "I won't glorify the Mafia!"

But Schulberg said that by some magic, the next time Marchak showed up, Brando had used an eyebrow pencil to draw a little mustache on himself and said, "How do I look?" Marchak responded: "Like George Raft."

Raft was an actor who often played gangsters on the big screen.

Each time she went to see Brando, Marchak told Schulberg, he was wearing a different Mafia-don mustache. Despite his initial reservations about the film, Brando obviously had a change of heart. But Paramount studio executives demanded he take a screen test. Brando obliged.

The role revived Brando's career and won him a second Academy Award, which he turned down.

Brando died in July at age 80. *Reuters*

Perennial loser Marty join winners Gwyneth, Halle

LOS ANGELES—Hollywood darlings Gwyneth Paltrow and Halle Berry will join famed director Martin Scorsese in the lineup of presenters at this year's Academy Awards, organizers said Tuesday.

Previous Oscar winners Paltrow, Berry and Scorsese, one of this year's best director nominees, have all signed on to hand out golden statuettes at the Feb. 27 ceremony in Hollywood, producers said.

Paltrow won the Best Actress Oscar for her role in the 1998 film "Shakespeare in Love" and starred in last year's futuristic feature "Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow."

She is also known for her turns in films including "The Talented Mr. Ripley," "Emma," "Sylvia," in which she played poet Sylvia Plath and 2001's "The Royal Tenenbaums."

Berry became the first black woman to take home the Best Actress Oscar. She won in 2002 for her role as the wife of a death row prisoner in "Monster's Ball."

Her other film credits include her role as a Bond girl in the British spy thriller "Die Another Day," and turns in "Swordfish," "X-Men," "Bulworth," "Losing Isaiah," and "The Flintstones."

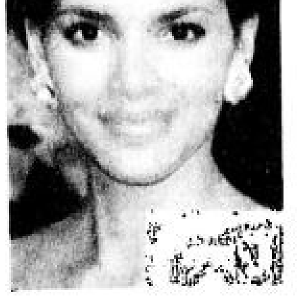
Scorsese is nominated as Best Director this year for his biopic "The Aviator," the life story of eccentric US billionaire Howard Hughes.

The three join Salma Hayek and former Academy Award winner Tim Robbins.

Also handing out the "golden guys" at the 77th annual Academy Awards will be last year's Best Actress Oscar winner, South African star Charlize Theron and the 2003 winner, Renee Zellweger.

Also signed on to hand out come of cinema's highest honors is "Lord of the Rings" star Orlando Bloom. *AFP*

PALTROW



BERRY

SCORSESE

Sex and star quality at Berlin film festival

BERLIN—Will Smith and Keanu Reeves are expected to lend the 55th Berlin film festival star quality, organizers said Tuesday, while sex as science and titillation is set to be one of the event's outstanding themes.

More than 350 films will be showing at the Feb. 10-20 festival known as the Berlinale, including 21 productions competing for the prestigious Golden Bear award for best film.

Smith and Reeves are two of the big Hollywood names tentatively lined up to appear at the festival to sprinkle some stardust and promote their movies, which are rivals for best film.

In "Hitch," Smith portrays a marriage broker with a gift for pairing Ordinary Joes with extraordinarily beautiful women while Reeves handles the descent into the hell of drug addiction in "Thumbsucker."

While Berlin makes no claim to influence the race for an Oscar and ranks just below Cannes and alongside Venice, winning the Golden Bear can propel European and international films to success around the world. *AFP*